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President: Mr. Udovenko .... (Ukraine)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Address by Mr. Marc Forné Molné, President of the Government of the Principality of Andorra

The President: The Assembly will first hear an address by the President of the Government of the Principality of Andorra.

Mr. Marc Forné Molné, President of the Government of the Principality of Andorra, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Government of the Principality of Andorra, His Excellency Mr. Marc Forné Molné, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Forné Molné (Andorra) *(spoke in Catalan; English text furnished by the delegation)*: I should like first to thank for his work the outgoing President, Ismail Razali. My Ambassador, the Andorran Vice-President for the fifty-first session of the General Assembly, was a firsthand witness to both the diplomatic skill and dedication of his Malaysian counterpart. On behalf of the Government of Andorra and the Andorran people, I should like to pay tribute to his work and to thank him publicly for the trust he placed in my representative to the United Nations during this year — a year of great change and enormous challenges for the Organization.

Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. Andorra recognizes your reputation as a diplomat and your extensive experience. I have no doubt, therefore, that your presidency will be a great success and will bring about the consolidation of the reform of the United Nations, which we are beginning this year. Likewise, I extend my congratulations to the members of the General Committee, who are beginning their term as Vice-Presidents.

On 16 July, in this same Hall, I spoke after Secretary-General Annan for some minutes in order to show Andorra's support for his call for reform. The Principality of Andorra supports unconditionally the proposed reform of the United Nations, since we believe the Organization to be indispensable. As a small State, weak in a world of stronger Powers, it is in line with our national interest for us to desire that law and dialogue prevail over force and military strength. We also have more liberty than many other States to dedicate ourselves to the goals of peace and progress that were set, in a utopian spirit, by our forefathers in San Francisco.

For we are small and humble, and have no vast territories across the seas, no uranium mines on the other side of the world, no reserves of oil beneath our soil. Our interests go no farther than our own boundaries. After all, we possess the record for peace in the world — some 700 years. For all these reasons, Andorra and other small countries have the liberty to reflect on the future of mankind and the well-being of peoples as we approach

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the third millennium — without, I hope, any suggestion of the occult.

Indeed, many people have been surprised to discover that we have for centuries democratically elected our Government, and that we last used the death penalty over 50 years ago. In short, Andorrans are capable of resolving their problems without the use of force. And thanks to this legacy, without any misplaced pride or privilege, we wish to promote those reforms that will enable the United Nations to be the best hope for our peoples.

Immanuel Kant, in an essay dated 1784, stated:

> "If it is now asked whether we at present live in an enlightened age, the answer is: 'No, but we live in an age of enlightenment'."

At the end of the twentieth century, are we now living in an enlightened age? The crises of development and the military conflicts that still afflict our planet make us believe the opposite. To reach our goal of an age of enlightenment, we must count on the United Nations and its ideals, and we must also count on the small countries, which will never fail to defend it.

The proposals for the reform of the United Nations presented by the Secretary-General are conscientious, fair, innovative and practical. I will not comment at length on the new administrative structure proposed by Mr. Kofi Annan. To benefit from the assistance of a Deputy-Secretary-General appears to us a natural aspiration. All of those who serve a country at the highest level know how much time must be allotted to issues of protocol and to small meetings. It is necessary for the United Nations that the agenda of the Secretary-General be lightened so that he can concentrate on larger problems. This innovation will probably have the following consequences: the Secretary-General will be considered as the statesman and the Deputy-Secretary-General as the manager. This seems to me to be a good division of labour. What must be avoided, however, is that the Deputy-Secretary-General become a counter-force to the Secretary-General. The Deputy-Secretary-General must always be a faithful representative of the ideas of the Secretary-General in order to avoid administrative tension at the United Nations.

The reorganization of the management structure of the United Nations is a prerogative that we must recognize as belonging to the Secretary-General. I therefore lend my support, on behalf of Andorra, to reinforcing the role of the Executive Committees established in January of this year, as well as to the creation of a forerunner to an executive cabinet, the Senior Management Group. I share the Secretary-General's desire to see an evolution towards greater efficiency and productivity in the management of the United Nations.

As many others have done, I take this opportunity to congratulate Under-Secretary-General Joseph Connor for having brought a spirit of good management to our Organization. It seems that during this decade in which budgets have imposed the need for cutbacks, many Governments have learned that it was necessary to reorganize resources, establish the proper relationship between work and goals and find the means to reorganize their bureaucracies and render them more efficient with regard to the work of their administrations. This was often inspired by the strategies used in private enterprise.

I thank the Secretary-General for having had the courage to begin this difficult task in the Organization. We in Andorra will try to find inspiration in the principles which will lead the Secretary-General in his reforms in order to make our own administration in Andorra more efficient.

Another point which I would like to emphasize concerns the decision of Secretary-General Annan to shift the work of the United Nations towards concrete objectives within specific time-frames. This strategy of working towards objectives will probably save money for the United Nations and serve as a model for the efforts needed to achieve development. That is the strategy which we follow in Andorra in the area of administration, and which every day becomes more accepted by many countries throughout the world.

It is well understood that these structural and functional reforms will lead to significant savings in the budget of the United Nations. However, it is of primary importance that Member States pay their debts to the Organization as they agreed to do in acceding to the Charter of the United Nations. Let us be clear: the delay in making payments to the United Nations acts as such a heavy weight on any attempt at reform that it will be nearly impossible to make progress if the conditions of payment are not met.

I would like to emphasize that my country, Andorra, pays its assessments to the budget of the Organization dependably and on a per capita basis, as do many other countries. If each citizen of my country contributes almost $2 annually to the regular budget of the Organization, why can the people of other developed countries not do the same, even when the per capita amount that is asked of them is significantly less than that of Andorra? Happily, there are admirable and exemplary citizens who are able to make up for the insufficiencies of their own countries.

We are, after all, touching on an important topic: the confidence that we have or do not have in the United Nations. Andorra has full confidence in the United Nations. Even though we believe that the creation of a revolving fund of $1 billion is only a temporary remedy for a financial situation that should never have existed, we are prepared to add an additional 10 per cent of our annual contribution to this emergency fund if the other Member States are equally supportive and on the condition that the debtors — whether they be large or small — pay their debts in the future.

The Secretary-General asks us to consider the promotion of sustainable development as a central priority of the reform of the United Nations. On a planet that is capable before the third millennium of producing machines that travel to the moon and to Mars, sophisticated computers to help us, travel networks that link Ulan Bator with Johannesburg or Andorra La Vella with Lima in the space of a few hours — on this planet of limitless advances — the dawn of the year 2000 reveals the existence of hundreds of millions of poor people and a worrisome decline in our environment. How can we go from speeches to acts, from bemoaning the problems of the world to commitment, and undertake those actions which will bring an end to the present degradation?

Only the United Nations, as a global Organization, possesses the structure to realize those projects needed to bring about global development in the long term. We therefore applaud the Secretary-General's initiative to reform those practices leading towards development. Andorra supports him in his goal of reducing duplication and increasing the coordination of resources. In the next decade we must bring to the United Nations the most brilliant minds on the planet and put them to work in a shared spirit of rationalization in order to understand both the causes of underdevelopment and the path to follow in order eradicate it in the twenty-first century. Just as the World Health Organization eradicates diseases that afflict the citizens of the world, so too must the United Nations serve as a catalyst for the eradication of those evils that afflict the world's peoples.

We share the Secretary-General's particular concern for the natural environment, which is the common denominator of the world. If the Earth dies during the coming centuries, it will take all of us with it, rich and poor, peoples of the North and the South.

In his inaugural speech last week the President pointed to the nuclear disaster of Chernobyl as a disaster that continues to haunt not only his own country, but all of us as well. We therefore approve of the Secretary-General's plan to transform the Trusteeship Council into a body for protecting the integrity of the global environment and of shared areas such as the atmosphere and outer space.

We also believe in the mission of peace that the Secretary-General has foreseen for the United Nations. For every conflict there is a "before", a "middle", and an "after". Andorra has learned during its seven centuries of peace that it is better to take action during the "before" stage. The world calls such action preventive diplomacy.

It is all too easy to dismiss the existence of small countries as improbable and irrelevant accidents brought about by historical providence. We do not appreciate sufficiently the troubles through which many of those States — Andorra among them — have struggled at certain historic moments and that might have resulted in their disappearance from the face of the Earth. Not having an army and not using force, we have learned by necessity the importance of diplomacy. In the United Nations we must use such diplomacy by choice and by desire.

Why should we not consider, among other possibilities, the establishment of a reliable and discreet system of information to measure the political temperature of points of tension throughout the world? Why do we not empower the Security Council to examine in its debates these difficult questions before a conflict arises and temperatures become inflamed beyond the burning point? Indeed, as we consider the reform of the Security Council, why do we not concentrate more on its deeper action, with a view to giving it the means to accomplish preventative diplomacy, as we consider its size and structure?

It is truly a matter of regret that the United Nations is not the best instrument for armed intervention during a conflict, unless it is for humanitarian reasons. Perhaps this situation will change if we succeed in establishing a greater force with a greater capacity for military reaction. The United Nations can help the healing after a conflict. If we give it the means, the United Nations may become a humanitarian and preventive force of the highest order. Andorra, which does not have and does not wish to have an army, is in the process of considering the establishment of a humanitarian force that will align itself with these objectives and with the words of international solidarity inscribed in our Constitution.

There is no better way to prevent conflicts than to teach and advance human rights and democracy. Political scientists tell us that democracies do not make war with each other. Common sense tells us that people who respect and revere the articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights will always find a peaceful way to negotiate their differences. For this reason, I have asked my Ambassador to the United Nations to devote, as he has before, a large part of his efforts at Headquarters to the Third Committee of the General Assembly. I have also asked him to study carefully the ways in which the Third Committee might strengthen its procedures in order that the spirit of reform which permeates the United Nations during this time might extend to all its forums of deliberation.

Andorra believes in the United Nations and, at the global level, supports the desire of the Secretary-General for reform. I have just explained our reasons for this, but, because people and States believe in the United Nations, we must better understand its functioning and its weaknesses — which are similar to those of any humanitarian organization — and especially its goals and its strengths.

Today, I would like to stress the need for a general and ongoing effort to present the United Nations to the world. We live in a world of images, as the events of recent weeks clearly demonstrate. During this time, two great humanitarian figures have died: one who selflessly dedicated her life to the poor, the other who dared to embrace the sick whom nobody dared to touch. These two women, Mother Teresa of Calcutta and Diana, Princess of Wales, both lived under the light of public interest and used it to spread their humanitarian messages. In Great Britain, the Princess of Wales Fund is becoming one of the largest in the world. And yet, it is difficult for us to gain public sympathy and donations for the United Nations, although it is the first and most important instrument for works beneficial to all humanity.

Why is this so? Perhaps because it has an image problem. In these closing years of the century, let us link the United Nations to the peoples to which its Charter refers. Let us show these peoples that the diplomats of 1997 are not a club of ladies and gentlemen with little work who wander through the halls of this building. It might be a good idea — in emulation of the United Nations Children's Fund, which has established a lively and effective presence in Andorra through its National Committee — for us to ask celebrities and leaders of opinion to serve as spokespeople for the United Nations in their countries and across the world. We have the message, the mandate, and indeed the successes, but have been less successful in communicating them and allow the public to forget our actions. Let us consider together the appropriate public relations and communication strategies for the United Nations at this fifty-second session, a session of reform.

Two months ago, during my participation in the General Assembly when the Secretary-General announced his reform, I wanted to underline two points of special importance for the Andorran delegation. Today I should like to reaffirm these two aspects. First, I emphasized the importance of the small countries during this process of reform. If the reform leads to a shift away from the founding principles of the United Nations, our Organization will cease to be universal. I concede that, without the bigger countries, reform is not possible, but without the support of small countries reform will only be partial. Secondly, I called for the greater participation of youth in the process of reform and the workings of the United Nations. This is a priority for our delegation: Let us make the future with those who will inherit it.

I conclude my speech today with a call of hope and a vote of faith: faith in the United Nations and its capacity for transformation and improvement in its pursuit of peace and development; confidence in its Secretary-General, who has begun his mandate with firmness and decision, as he should; and, finally, an unshakeable belief in the irrepressibility of human progress. Through the United Nations, let us make the new millennium an age of enlightenment.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank His Excellency the President of the Government of the Principality of Andorra for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Marc Forné Molné, President of the Government of the Principality of Andorra, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Koffi Panou, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Togo.

Mr. Panou (Togo) (*interpretation from French*): I should like to join those who have spoken before me in offering you, Sir, my warmest congratulations on your outstanding election to the presidency of our Assembly.

To your illustrious predecessor, Mr. Razali Ismail of Malaysia, my delegation reaffirms its satisfaction with the efficiency and competence with which he guided the work of the fifty-first session. We wish once again to convey to him our sincere appreciation.

I also wish once again to welcome the election of Mr. Kofi Annan as Secretary-General of our Organization. In raising him to this position, the international community recognized the qualities that have brought honour to him, his country and the entire African continent. On behalf of my delegation, I pay tribute to him for his dedication to the cause of international peace and security and for all he is doing to make the United Nations more effective and credible by improving its capacity to meet the needs of today's world.

Two years ago, we celebrated the United Nations first half-century. We recommitted ourselves solemnly to working together to advance peace, development, equality, justice and understanding among all the peoples of the world. The current session provides us with another opportunity to assess our collective work at a time when we are preparing to enter the twenty-first century with major achievements under our belt, to be sure, but also with innumerable challenges to face.

In its ongoing quest to make life better for peoples, our Organization has adopted and is implementing alternative strategies to meet the demands of a world in constant change. The proclamation of the United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, the advancement of the rights of women and children, and the convening of a special session of the General Assembly on environment and development are all actions demonstrating the determination of the United Nations to address the great problems of our time. But we must recognize that, despite the efforts of the international community to establish a new world order, we are still waiting for the ardently desired peace, security, development and growth to materialize.

Despite the detente that has existed since the end of the East-West antagonism, the international political situation continues to present a gloomy picture, marked by ongoing disputes, tensions and conflicts. Even if piecemeal efforts are made to settle these crises, definitive solutions seem to elude us. Thus, we remain deeply concerned for the future of mankind.

Moreover, our helplessness in the face of resurgent terrorism, worsening poverty, the ever growing number of refugees and displaced persons and the deterioration of the environment dims our hope that the noble objectives laid down in the Charter to build a better world for future generations will ever come true.

In this context, Togo, under the guidance of the President of the Republic, Mr. Gnassingbé Eyadema, is striving to strengthen the political and legal bases of a state of law and to make development and, above all, the eradication of poverty the cornerstones of its policy.

The citizens of Togo have entered a new era in the achievement of greater liberty, justice and progress in order to make their country a democratic, united and prosperous nation. Every day, they demonstrate their will to reflect in their actions this deep-rooted desire to live together in peace and unity. According to experienced observers of good faith, the democratic institutions established in Togo are proving themselves. The National Assembly, having become an outstanding forum for democratic debate, is living proof of the country's commitment to entrench itself in democracy.

Most of the other institutions of the Republic provided for under the Constitution have been established — for example, the High Audiovisual and Communication Authority, the Constitutional Court, the National Commission for Human Rights and the Supreme Council for the Courts.

Aware, moreover, that they control their own destiny, the Togolese have decided to work together towards a sound and transparent administration of public affairs. How could we not, therefore, be pleased by the economic performances achieved thanks to efforts made for the effective implementation of the Government programme? The gross domestic product increased by 6 per cent in 1996, and the rate of inflation has shown a clear improvement compared to 1995 thanks to a prudent wages and monetary policy. Improved export competitiveness and the progressive resumption of cooperation have allowed us to correct the balance of payments and strengthen Togo's contribution to the reserves of the West African Economic and Monetary Union. The people of Togo hope that the community of nations will continue to support it in its progress towards legitimacy and legality by helping it to complete the work of economic recovery.

The maintenance of peace continues to be the primary task of the United Nations. One cannot over-emphasize that preventing crises, reducing tension, separating combatants and finding definitive solutions to conflicts continue to be among the fundamental missions of our Organization. We are pleased to see in Togo that the United Nations, through concerted actions, continues day by day to do even more. My country confirms its unswerving dedication to the principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes, in accordance with international law, and emphasizes the need to strengthen in this area cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations. Chapter VIII of the Charter would then take on its full meaning.

Despite every effort, peace remains threatened on our planet, particularly on the African continent. As regards the Republic of the Congo, Togo is concerned over the situation there since 5 June 1997. We keenly hope that the protagonists will put aside their arms in favour of dialogue in accordance with the spirit of Libreville Summit, held on 14 and 15 September 1997, in which eight Heads of State, including President Eyadema of Togo, participated. The Government of Togo urgently calls upon our brothers in the Congo to conclude as quickly as possible a final ceasefire so that, under the aegis of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the international interposition force planned by that last summit can be deployed.

As regards the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Togo, needless to say, was involved in the search for a peaceful solution to the crisis by hosting in Lomé last March a special summit of the Central Organ of the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution in Africa. Faced with a new political situation, my Government would urge the authorities in Kinshasa to do everything in their power to provide a climate favourable to national reconciliation in order to tackle the priority tasks of development.

In Sierra Leone, the hope born of the establishment of a democratic regime and the signing of the peace agreement in Abidjan in November 1996 between the Government and the Revolutionary United Front was thoroughly tested by the putsch of 25 May 1997. My country strongly condemned this coup. It is demanding the reestablishment of constitutional order and earnestly hopes that this question can be peacefully resolved in order to avoid another crisis for the West African subregion at a time when the Liberian conflict is coming to a close. The people of Togo are pleased to note that, on the basis of the Abuja Agreement, the presidential, legislative and senatorial elections were finally able to take place last 19 July in an atmosphere of discipline, transparency and peace. My delegation takes this opportunity to congratulate the mission carried out by the Economic Community of West African States, supported by the United Nations and the OAU, from the beginning of the conflict to the establishment of new democratic institutions.

I should like, moreover, given the instability that Africa is experiencing, to remind the parties concerned that they must seek to prevent fratricidal conflicts, which diverts their energy from the path of development. More thought should therefore be given to establishing an African peacekeeping force, which was first suggested by President Eyadema at the thirtieth session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the OAU, held in Tunisia in 1994. There is now an imperative, urgent need to establish such a force, which could react promptly and effectively to any armed conflict, in order to reestablish peace and stability as quickly as possible wherever necessary.

I would like again this year to return to the question of the Regional Centre of the United Nations for Peace and Disarmament in Africa and to welcome the sending by the Secretary-General of a mission of consultants to Lomé and other African capitals to explore ways and means of revitalizing the Centre. It is clear from the decision taken in Harare by the thirty-third session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the OAU that the Centre has a vital role to play in the maintenance of peace and security in Africa as well as in the prevention of conflicts on the continent.

I cannot fail to mention here the situation in other parts of the world.

Regarding the Middle East, my country, which had in the past hailed the courage, dedication and spirit of initiative of the Israeli and Palestinian leaders in the implementation of the timetable for the withdrawal from the occupied territories, is today concerned about the blocking of the peace process in the region. We deplore the continuation of the settlements policy and the resumption of acts of violence, which only serve to undermine the climate of confidence that is a prerequisite for the pursuit of dialogue.

Togo urges the parties to resume negotiations in accordance with the Agreements of 1993 and 1994 in order to relaunch the peace process and achieve a comprehensive and lasting settlement of the conflict in the Middle East, which has lasted now for more than half a century and is a threat to the peace and security of the States of the region.

I turn to the situation in the Korean Peninsula. Togo has been following with great interest the talks under way and calls for the establishment of lasting peace in this region. We hope that the negotiations that have begun will continue and will be crowned with success.

Everyone is aware that most of these conflicts have claimed, and continue to claim, numerous victims, including refugees and displaced persons.

The proliferation of weapons, whatever their type, is a threat to peace and security. To be sure, commendable efforts have been made to create a world free from the spectre of nuclear war. However, it must be emphasized that the maintenance of international peace and security hinges on general and complete disarmament. My country hailed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and considers the entry into force on 29 April this year of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction to be a decisive act by the international community in its permanent quest for a peaceful world. In ratifying this Convention, Togo wished to stress its unequivocal commitment to general and complete disarmament. It hopes that implementing the provisions of this Convention will help spare mankind the innumerable evils resulting from the use of such weapons.

Regarding anti-personnel landmines, my country hails the process begun in Ottawa in 1996, which concluded in Oslo with the adoption of the treaty regarding the use, storage, production and transfer of those mines and their destruction. We hope that this treaty, which will open for signature next December in Ottawa, will be ratified and rigorously applied by all States, so that, because of its universal nature, many human lives may be saved.

The end of the bipolarization associated with the cold war allowed the international community to glimpse a world in which efforts would henceforth be mobilized to eliminate poverty so as to ensure development and well-being for humankind. However, we are obliged to note that, despite this favourable environment for peace and economic expansion, poverty continues to grow unchecked and remains a striking phenomenon in our world. This situation provides a good illustration of the failure of the numerous development strategies put forward by the international community.

In this context, the case of Africa remains the most worrying. The burden of external debt, the drop in export earnings and the adverse consequences of trade imbalances have largely contributed to an increased deterioration in socio-economic conditions in many countries. The world economy, characterized, as we near the end of the century, by the phenomenon of globalization, has experienced a general growth in almost all countries over the past few years. It is regrettable, however, that despite this globalization the new rules of trade have not made it possible to dismantle the barriers erected by the industrialized countries to protect their industry and agriculture. It follows that it is still difficult for our products to gain access to their markets.

These protectionist measures, which do enormous damage to developing countries, especially in Africa, cancel out the efforts made by African countries to relaunch the growth of their economies through exports.

We cannot stress enough how much damage is caused by the closing of the markets of the North to the products of developing countries. This situation deprives the countries of the South of substantial foreign-currency income, which are necessary to promote sustained development. In this respect, the Government of Togo fully appreciates the willingness of the richest countries, reaffirmed last June at the Denver Summit, intend to open their markets further to the countries of the South. We believe that by lifting their protectionist barriers the developed countries will make a genuine and tangible contribution to the development efforts being made by the less well-off.

In this light, my Government believes that globalization must be accompanied by an impetus for increased solidarity, characterized by the willingness of the countries of the North to buy our staple commodities at remunerative prices.

Despite the commendable efforts undertaken by African Governments within the framework of structural-adjustment programmes, the economic situation in our

States remains difficult, and living conditions for our populations are increasingly precarious. Given this state of affairs, the international community has developed various strategies to help the African States find viable and lasting solutions to their many socio-economic problems. It is important to welcome here the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa, which my delegation believes supports and complements the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF), as well as the Cairo Programme of Action for the social and economic development of Africa.

My country also pays tribute to the Government of Japan which, in addition to its unfailing support to developing countries, has taken the positive initiative of planning to convene, in 1998, the second Tokyo International Conference on African Development. It is very desirable for the various parties involved in African development who will be participating in that forum, including Africans themselves, to become more involved in the conception and the implementation of development programmes for out continent.

Development policies for our countries cannot be conceived today without cooperation and regional integration. In this respect, the entry into force of the Treaty establishing the African Economic Community is a good illustration of the will of the African States to pool their efforts to achieve sustainable development. Togo would like to reaffirm its commitment to the policy of economic integration of the continent and urges the United Nations and the international community to support the African countries in their efforts to achieve the objectives of sustainable development so as to promote prosperity and well-being for their populations.

We are pleased to note that 52 years after the adoption of the Charter in San Francisco, many processes are under way, aimed in particular at strengthening the United Nations system, resolving the financial crisis of the Organization and restructuring the United Nations in the social and economic spheres and in related areas, including the Security Council.

With regard to the Security Council in particular, it is important that the ongoing discussions on its restructuring aim at and succeed in expanding the number of both permanent and non-permanent members. Such an enlargement should take into account the interests of developing countries and should be based on equitable geographic representation in order to make the Council more representative and more democratic, thereby enabling it to respond more effectively to the requirements of the day.

Within the framework of efforts to revitalize the Organization, my delegation has noted with interest the measures envisaged by the Secretary-General and the recommendations contained in his report, presented on 16 July, which are aimed at restructuring the Secretariat and providing it with the means to serve the Member States more effectively. At this session the Assembly will have an opportunity to take part in a careful and in-depth consideration of that report.

Togo wishes to stress that the decisions and measures resulting from such consideration should not reduce the capacity of the Organization in the development field. We therefore hope, as the Secretary-General himself has proposed, that the savings resulting from more rigorous management will permit the financing of United Nations priority programmes, such as those for the elimination of poverty and the advancement of sustained economic growth in the developing countries.

At the dawn of the third millennium, humankind is at a decisive stage in its history and requires greater pragmatism, creativity and solidarity in settling its problems. In this respect, our world, in a spirit of solidarity, must mobilize further to eliminate poverty, which is the vital concern of our time, as it impedes the cohesiveness of societies and States, destroys the very basis of human rights and damages the environment. We therefore need to tackle this principal cause of instability — poverty — with the same urgency and vigour that we apply to political crises. For it is clear that no system of collective security can be viable unless we seek effectively to resolve the problems of poverty and misery that are the daily lot of most of the population of the world.

Together, therefore, let us seek a new international order based on peace, solidarity and justice.

The President: I now give the floor to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Cooperation of Luxembourg, His Excellency Mr. Jacques Poos, who will speak on behalf of the European Union.

Mr. Poos (Luxembourg) (*interpretation from French*): First of all, I should like to extend my warmest congratulations to you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. As an architect of stability, you have played a substantial role in securing the recent conclusion of a number of major agreements with Ukraine's neighbouring countries. I am certain that both that experience and the experience you have acquired in the field of international relations and at the United Nations will be decisive factors in leading this session to a successful outcome. I should like to assure you, Sir, of our full support.

I should also like to thank your predecessor, Ambassador Razali, for the skill and commitment with which he led our work at the last session of the General Assembly. I also wish to express my appreciation to our Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for the splendid work he has performed since taking office and, in particular, for his wide-ranging proposals for the reform of the United Nations, which he presented last 16 July.

It is an honour for me to address this Assembly today on behalf of the European Union, which, like the United Nations, is seeking to change and renew itself in order to face more effectively the challenges of the new millennium.

Globalization, with its emphasis on growing interdependence between nations and their economies, is bringing profound changes in international relations. A particular feature of this globalization is the genuine revolution in the field of information and communications technologies, which banishes any notion of geographical distance. Globalization, characterized by the acceleration of trade and financial flows and by increased market integration, is a source for both progress and fresh opportunities. However, it also raises some serious questions, even among the industrialized countries, which are experiencing a worrying rise in unemployment. We note at the same time that these developments are passing by many developing countries, which remain in great poverty. More than 1.5 billion people still live in absolute poverty. We cannot remain indifferent to this situation.

We are particularly concerned by the growing inequality both within countries and between countries of the North and of the South, which is a dangerous source of further conflict and tension.

Free of the threat of confrontation in a polarized world, we are faced today with a series of global problems both old and new: underdevelopment, population growth, increasingly large-scale migration, damage to the environment, the proliferation of weapons of all kinds, terrorism, ethnic conflict, drug trafficking, violence — the blind, hateful violence against innocent people that we witness nearly every day, for example in Algeria — and crime, often in forms never before encountered.

In order to deal successfully with all these problems, it is essential that we continue to promote justice and solidarity between all countries and individuals as well as tolerance — I lay particular stress on "tolerance" — and respect for others and, above all, to strengthen cooperation between States on both the regional and the world levels.

Progressive integration that respects national identity is a hallmark of the policy of the States members of the European Union. In scarcely more than 50 years, we have succeeded in developing in Europe a stability and a prosperity that the continent has never before experienced. The European Union is based on democracy as its political system and on a social market economy as its economic system. Our market economy is not a free-for-all; it is mitigated by considerations of social welfare. States retain full responsibility in the fields of health, education and social justice. Although this system requires constant adjustment, its principles are sacrosanct.

The European Union, wishing to respond to the challenges of the post-cold-war world, proposes to take up three major challenges over the years ahead: the establishment of an economic and monetary union; the strengthening of its institutional base through the implementation of the Amsterdam Treaty; and preparation for further enlargement towards the eastern and southern Europe.

Economic and monetary union is probably the most important and most ambitious economic and political project to be implemented by Europe since the beginning of the integration process. The Euro, as the single currency is to be known, will come into existence on 1 January 1999. Its introduction is the culmination of the lengthy process of implementation of the single market. The Euro is the logical consequence of the venture embarked upon with the European Community's foundation in 1957.

In order to prepare for the single currency, the States members of the European Union have successfully committed themselves to strengthening the coordination of their economic policies and the pursuit of healthier, more stable macroeconomic and budgetary policies.

The creation of the Euro will help to achieve greater stability and a more balanced international monetary system. It will help to reduce monetary uncertainty and will give a boost to the development of trade, investment and, hence, growth and employment both at the European and the world levels.

The Heads of State or Government of the European Union reached political agreement on 17 June this year on a new treaty for Europe, the Amsterdam Treaty. This Treaty will be submitted for signature by plenipotentiaries in two weeks' time. The Amsterdam Treaty marks a further step in the building of Europe and opens the way for the launching of the enlargement process. It provides for greater consistency in the external action of the Union, and will enable it to anticipate crises more effectively and to provide a more efficient protection of its economic interests. It emphasizes the defence and security dimension of the European Union, and clarifies in particular the Union's role in respect of peacekeeping or peacemaking missions and humanitarian action.

The new Treaty also provides for the creation of an area of freedom, security and justice, which will enable the Union to take more effective and coordinated action to combat terrorism, major crime and illegal immigration. Finally, a number of provisions underline the importance that the Union attaches to the promotion and to the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

This coming December, the Union will take major decisions on future enlargement. Negotiations on accession should begin as early as possible next year. The international repercussions of the enlargement of the Union will far transcend the new frontiers of an enlarged Europe; this enlargement will add to Europe's influence in the world, will provide the European Union with new neighbours and will make Europe a peaceful, more united and more stable area.

In taking up these three challenges, the European Union member States seek to unite further in order to form a common front against the problem of unemployment and to take more effective action to combat organized crime, terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of every kind, to act more effectively to prevent major environmental damage and to ensure lasting growth while making the best possible use of the world's resources.

At the same time, the European Union is seeking to increase its influence over world affairs, promote values such as peace and security, democracy and human rights in a more effective manner, defend its conception of the social model and assert its presence on international markets.

It is in that spirit, and in order to strengthen cooperation in the political, economic and financial fields, that the European Union is developing relations of partnership with all the countries of the world.

A larger and more united European Union will also make a greater contribution towards development cooperation with the most disadvantaged countries. The development assistance of the European Union is part of a policy designed to roll back poverty and inequality in the world and to foster a sustainable development.

The Union is already the largest contributor to the regular budget of the United Nations and to the budget for United Nations peacekeeping operations. It is also the largest international aid donor. The European Community and its member States provide over half the humanitarian aid dispensed worldwide and fund 50 per cent of international development aid. We provide 40 per cent of assistance for the reconstruction process in Bosnia and Herzegovina, nearly 60 per cent of international aid to Russia and to the republics of the former Soviet Union, half of the aid for the Palestinian territories and one third of the total aid for the Middle East.

As in the past, the European Union describes its relations with third countries, together with its positions on and action in respect of areas of conflict throughout the world, in a memorandum that is circulated as an integral part of this address. I should like, however, to highlight a number of issues which continue to hold our full attention.

The European Union continues to make a major contribution towards the consolidation of peace in all the countries of the former Yugoslavia. It wishes to develop its relations and to strengthen its cooperation with those countries to the extent that their respective Governments pursue a policy which respects the peace agreements concluded and which enables them to progress towards democracy, the rule of law, tolerance and respect for human rights and minorities.

The European Union is concerned at the tardiness in implementing the peace agreements in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It emphasizes that the responsibility for such implementation rests with the parties themselves.

We fully support the efforts of the High Representative, Mr. Carlos Westendorp. We pay a tribute to his deputy, Ambassador Gerd Wagner, to Mr. David

Krishkovich and to their colleagues who have given their lives in their commitment to peace.

The European Union is determined to insist on the strict and full application of the peace agreements in Bosnia and Herzegovina and of the conclusions of the Sintra ministerial meeting. It is on the basis of such application that the European Union is willing to continue to contribute to the international reconstruction effort. It continues to attach great importance to the return of refugees and displaced persons and to demand the full cooperation of all parties with the International Criminal Tribunal as a necessary condition for a lasting reconciliation and a just peace.

Without minimizing the difficulties in the Muslim Croat Federation, the European Union observes with concern the political crisis which has erupted in the Republika Srpska. It calls on all parties to respect the constitutional functioning of that entity and to take vigorous action to reform the police and to establish freedom of the press. We believe the holding of legislative elections under the supervision of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) constitutes the appropriate and democratic means for resolving the present political deadlock.

The European Union welcomes the recent holding of municipal elections, on 13 and 14 September, with the participation of all the parties. These elections mark an important step in the process of democratization in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We appeal to the parties to respect the results as certified by the OSCE.

The European Union also remains concerned by the situation in Kosovo, in particular by the lack of respect for human rights and the principles of the rule of law.

Concerning Cyprus, the European Union regrets that the intercommunal talks under the aegis of the United Nations have failed to register progress. We call on the leaders of both communities to resume the talks, as proposed by Mr. Cordovez. We urge them and all parties concerned to work constructively and in good faith to promote the success of these talks. We reject any link between the talks and the membership negotiations with Cyprus. The latter will be initiated in accordance with the decisions taken by the European Council and will contribute positively towards the search for a political solution. The European Union recalled that Cypriot membership should benefit both communities and should help to bring about civil peace and reconciliation.

In the Middle East, the peace process is at a worrisome standstill. The European Union calls on the peoples and Governments of the region to renew the spirit of mutual confidence which, at Madrid in 1991 and in Oslo in 1993, gave rise to the hope of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace. We call upon the Israeli and Palestinian leaders to continue the negotiations to further the implementation of the Interim Agreement and the Hebron agreement, and to resume talks on permanent status. We ask them once more to abstain from any unilateral action which may prejudice the issues relating to permanent status.

The European Union firmly condemns the recent terrorist attacks in Jerusalem. We call on each side to show absolute determination in combating terrorism. We hope that cooperation in the field of security between Israel and the Palestinian Authority will be re-established and reinforced. To that end, we propose the setting up of a permanent security committee with the participation of the parties involved and, possibly, with that of the United States and the European Union.

We urge both parties not to yield to blackmail by extremists bent on sabotaging the peace process. We ask that Israel discontinue certain measures taken with regard to the Palestinians which we consider to be counter-productive. In particular, we ask that Israel transfer all of the tax revenue owed to the Palestinian Authority. It is not in the interests of peace to weaken the Palestinian economy, administration and leadership and to feed the feelings of frustration and humiliation of an entire people. In the opinion of the European Union, peace remains the only strategic choice and the only lasting guarantee for the security and prosperity of both sides.

The European Union will continue, through the efforts of its Special Envoy for the Middle East Peace Process, Ambassador Moratinos, as well as through its diplomatic relations, its economic commitment and its relations of friendship and trust with the various parties, to work with the parties concerned both within and outside the region, and especially with the United States, to relaunch the peace process.

In Africa, major developments have occurred in recent months, notably in the Great Lakes region, which continues to experience serious problems. The European Union fully supports the efforts undertaken there, as elsewhere, by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in close cooperation with the United Nations. It welcomes the action taken by both its special representative, Mr. Ajello, and the Special Representative of the Secretaries-General of the United Nations and the OAU, Mr. Sahnoun. The international community must thus aim at establishing peace, at consolidating the process of national reconciliation in the countries concerned, at creating a climate conducive to the voluntary return of refugees and of facilitating the establishment of normal democratic life. We support the introduction of the rule of law, which should put an end to the climate of impunity prevailing in the region and encourage its economic and social recovery.

The accession of the new authorities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo signals a very important change for the Congo and the whole of Africa. The European Union is aware of the scale of requirements for reconstruction in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and is willing to contribute its support for reconstruction. It confirms its readiness to resume cooperation with that Government on a gradual basis. The resumption of cooperation will depend, according to the conclusions of the European Council of Amsterdam, on the progress observed in the fields of human rights, democratization and the establishment of the rule of law.

The European Union emphasizes the need for the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to cooperate fully with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in order to ensure the safe return of refugees, particularly to Rwanda. We also urge the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to cooperate fully with the United Nations in order that the mission investigating the allegations of massacres and other human rights violations can take place without impediment or delay.

The European Union remains seriously worried by the situation in the Republic of Congo (Brazzaville) and is concerned that the parties to the conflict have so far failed to overcome their differences. We urge all the parties involved to cease hostilities and to work together to achieve national reconciliation and restore a peaceful society. We reiterate the Union's full support for the mediation efforts undertaken by President Bongo of Gabon.

The European Union condemns all violence in Burundi. It encourages the authorities of that country to accelerate the dismantling of the reassembly camps. We earnestly appeal to all parties in Burundi to embark definitively on the road towards negotiation and national reconciliation.

The European Union is also concerned by the worsening insecurity in Rwanda's north-western provinces, which affects all populations, without exception.

The European Union welcomes the success of the monitoring mission in the Central African Republic, established under the Bangui Agreements.

The European Union also continues to be concerned by the situation in Cambodia, which is likely to jeopardize the whole democratization process and the major efforts by the international community in support of that country's reconstruction. We renew our support for the mediation efforts by the Association of South-East Asian Nations and welcome the constructive constitutional role played by His Majesty King Sihanouk in the search for a solution to this crisis.

We appeal for an immediate end to all violence in Cambodia and reiterate the importance we attach to the holding of free pluralist elections in 1998.

I would like now to take up several thematic questions.

The tragic consequences of the indiscriminate spread and use of anti-personnel landmines have aroused genuine emotion in world public opinion in recent years. In October 1996 the Union, for its part, adopted a decision on joint action on anti-personnel landmines in which it expresses its determination to achieve the aim of totally eliminating such mines and of actively working towards the earliest possible conclusion of an effective international agreement on a worldwide ban on these weapons.

We welcome the work done at the recent Oslo Diplomatic Conference, which resulted in the adoption of an international Convention. We shall also be pursuing the achievement of our aims at the Conference on Disarmament.

Next 10 December will see the start of celebrations on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. That Declaration, adopted on 10 December 1948, and the two international pacts and other legal instruments on the subject that were subsequently adopted, are still fully relevant today. We reaffirm our deep commitment to the universality of human rights and to their protection and promotion. The year 1988 will provide an opportunity for all members of the international community to step up their actions to ensure better implementation of the universal principles of the Declaration through the instruments and machinery of the United Nations.

The year 1998 will also be an opportunity to review the implementation of the Declaration and Programme of Action adopted at the World Conference on Human Rights held in Vienna in 1993.

We welcome the appointment of Mrs Mary Robinson as United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. She will have our full support. We wish to underline the importance of her mission, not least in the context of the fiftieth anniversary.

Regarding the environment and development, the General Assembly will be asked to endorse at this session the results of the special session on the follow-up to Agenda 21 and of the Rio Conference. The European Union considers it essential that the implementation of Agenda 21 receive fresh political impetus. We believe it is imperative that we come to a substantial conclusion of the negotiations on climate change to be held in Kyoto in December. We urge all States to work towards that end.

We have proposed clear objectives for the reduction of greenhouse-gas emissions, and we hope that other States will very soon be making their own detailed proposals in order to speed up the progress that is vitally needed if the Kyoto session of the Conference is to be a success.

Two years ago the Heads of State and Government meeting in this Hall on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations observed that, in a rapidly changing world, the objectives set out in the Charter had lost none of their relevance.

In many regions of the planet, we still have to face up to serious threats to international peace and security. More than ever, we need to promote economic and social development. It is vital that the ideals upon which our Organization is founded — human rights, good governance and democracy — come to be reflected more and more in the behaviour of public authorities and in people's everyday lives. The primacy of the rule of law must be reaffirmed.

We realize that if our Organization is to respond adequately to the profound changes in its external environment it must adapt its structures to the new realities of the modern world.

Last July we heard the Secretary-General's ambitious proposals, and we welcomed them. It is not, of course, a question of rewriting the mandates of the United Nations, to which we remain deeply committed, but of transforming the Organization into a productive and efficient instrument at the service of all the peoples of the world.

In examining these proposals, at its fifty-second session, the General Assembly is embarking on a period of debate and decision-making that promises to be one of the most significant in the history of the United Nations.

We need an Organization that fulfils its mandate to preserve peace and international security more rapidly and effectively by building better capacities for action in the fields of preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping and peacemaking, and by having more effective capacities for action in the areas of recovery and reconstruction after a conflict.

We need an Organization that responds better to one of its fundamental objectives, which consists of promoting economic and social progress, eradicating poverty and ensuring the widest possible participation in an expanding world economy.

We need United Nations funds and programmes that can translate the objectives of the Organization in the field of sustainable development. They must offer the countries and the peoples of the world both material support and a frame of reference that will enable them to generate their own development in the most efficient manner and in a way suited to their specific needs.

We need a United Nations system that provides a credible response to the complex problems of humanitarian assistance and emergency situations, problems which include conflict prevention, peacekeeping, rehabilitation and transition towards development.

Finally, we need an Organization that integrates in all its activities the fundamental concept of respect for human rights, which is an integral part of the quest for peace and security, economic prosperity and social justice.

To attain those objectives, our Organization must be able to rely not only on the commitment of the Secretary-General and the cooperation of Member States, but on the support of every sector of international society, and in particular on the non-governmental organizations, whose efforts inspire and complement our own.

The programme of reforms put forward by the Secretary-General has two parts. The first concerns the responsibility of the Secretary-General himself. It supplements the series of proposals he put forward in March this year. It is designed to rationalize the operations of Secretariat services and United Nations agencies and to improve their coordination. The proposals are intended to mould those services into a more coherent structure. There is a need to establish a community of ideas, a coherence of effort and greater flexibility in implementing action. We urge the Secretary-General to implement those proposals as quickly as possible. The European Union considers that modalities could be worked out to see that the savings realized are reinvested in the field of development.

The second part of the programme deals with improving the operation of the United Nations system and strengthening its intergovernmental machinery. It requires the approval of Member States. Here, too, the European Union believes that the method used and the choices made by the Secretary-General should open the way to effective and far-reaching reform of the United Nations. This applies particularly to the promotion of economic and social development, which must remain one of the priority objectives of our Organization.

In this sector, the reform should improve the Organization's capacity for action at the intergovernmental as well as the structural and managerial levels. In the view of the European Union, the reform of the United Nations, as an instrument in the service of development, cannot be conceived as a cost-cutting exercise; on the contrary, it must be designed to strengthen and revitalize the Organization so that it can respond to the challenges of the future in the most effective way possible. Only a reformed and revitalized United Nations can create the foundation for a global partnership between developing countries, developed countries and multilateral organizations, with the prime objective of achieving sustained and sustainable development.

The European Union believes that, taken as a whole, the programme of reforms proposed by the Secretary-General represents a balanced package. It attempts to take into account the various interests in play and, once implemented, will enable the Organization to fulfil its mandate more adequately and to carry out its tasks in the service of the international community more effectively.

We therefore consider that, if we want to achieve the renewal of the United Nations, it is of overriding importance that the Secretary-General's proposals be examined by the General Assembly in an integrated manner and as a package. It is also important to abide, so far as possible, by the timetable that the Secretary-General has suggested, so that the reform measures can start to be implemented at the beginning of 1998.

The reform programme before us affords us a unique opportunity to reform the Organization from top to bottom. It is for us, the Member States, to demonstrate the necessary ambition, courage and clarity of vision to show that we are equal to this challenge.

The European Union is well aware that the proposals before us necessarily represent a compromise between the sometimes divergent interests of Member States, and that they cannot, therefore, fully reflect either its own views or those of other schools of thought within the General Assembly.

Because we believe that the programme of reforms, taken as a whole, represents significant progress for our Organization, the Union does not intend to press for the fine points of its own positions to be taken into account with regard to each of the proposals or recommendations before us. It is our hope that other delegations will approach this exercise in a similar spirit and that they can agree to put the general positive thrust of the package of proposals before the satisfaction of their individual demands.

Over the coming weeks the European Union intends to play an active part in the Assembly's work. Our task is to reach general agreement on a feasible, constructive and coherent response to the Secretary-General's proposals, one that respects his responsibilities and his authority.

Necessary as it is, the reform exercise on which we have embarked will not bear fruit until the United Nations has the financial resources it needs to fulfil its mandates. For several years now, the United Nations has been embroiled in a financial crisis, which began as a cash-flow problem, but which has now become structural. That crisis is undermining the necessary sense of partnership between Member States and compromising implementation of the Organization's programmes in many areas. The European Union has often stated that the crisis cannot be resolved until all Member States have agreed to meet their obligations under the United Nations Charter in full by settling their arrears and by paying on time and without conditions the full amount of their mandatory contributions to the Organization's regular budget and to the budget of peacekeeping operations.

The States members of the European Union, whose contributions represent 35 per cent of the regular budget and 38 per cent of the peacekeeping budget, have always honoured their financial obligations promptly, fully and unconditionally.

The European Union has put forward a package of coherent proposals designed to put the Organization on a sound and predictable financial footing. They relate to measures to speed up the payment of arrears, to tighten up the system for paying contributions, to monitor United Nations spending more closely and to reform the scale of assessment so as to better reflect the principle of ability to pay.

It is important that together, at this fifty-second session of the General Assembly, we find a constructive and viable solution to these questions, which are fundamental if we wish to ensure that our Organization has the capacity to fulfil its mandate at the dawn of the twenty-first century.

The President: I now call on the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, His Excellency the Right Honourable Robin Cook.

Mr. Cook (United Kingdom): We inhabit a modern world in which we must accept change as the normal condition of life. Communication around the globe is becoming faster. The distance between our countries is becoming shorter. I travelled to New York at twice the speed of sound and I landed before I took off. Every word I say to the Assembly today will be sent to London down a telephone line and within minutes it will appear on the World Wide Web.

Our countries today are intertwined as never before in a market place that is global. And our people have learned that their purchasing decisions have an impact on jobs and pay across the planet — from the fruit they buy at the supermarket to the fuel they use in their cars. Changes to the environment in one continent can produce changes to the weather in another continent. Our countries are increasingly interdependent, and the challenges we each face are global challenges — challenges that we must face together: poverty, conflict, climate change, international crime and the drugs menace. These are all international problems that require us to behave as a united nations not just in name but in reality.

And so the United Nations should have a bigger role than ever before. If it appears to be less relevant, it is not for want of challenge but for want of reform. The United Nations must modernize. It must be able to confront the new global challenges that all its Members face. It will need flexibility, competence and efficiency to meet the complex needs of the twenty-first century because the United Nations cannot give leadership to a changing world if we ourselves refuse to change.

The outstanding leadership shown by the Secretary-General is an important start. His proposals for institutional reform will retain what is best in the United Nations system but give it the flexibility and the efficiency it needs to respond rapidly to the new challenges of a new century. The member countries of the United Nations must support his commitment to modernization. We must each stop measuring each proposal for reform in terms of narrow self-interest and, instead, recognize that we all have a greater interest in supporting reform.

Britain's Labour Government is firmly committed to the United Nations. We demonstrated this commitment as soon as we were elected by rejoining the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and by confirming our intention to stay in the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). We were elected because we offered Britain modernization to succeed in a new century. We pledge ourselves to back modernization of the United Nations. We do so because we know that our country, like all other Member States, will benefit from a United Nations that is efficient, representative and properly funded.

Let me take each of those in turn. Efficient does not spell cheap. But we do want to see the United Nations do the most it can with what it has got — a United Nations that no longer spends $150 million producing 2,500 tons of documents every year. We thoroughly welcome the Secretary-General's commitment to reduce the number of documents by 25 per cent by next year. We want to see an end to the duplication between United Nations agencies, and I give my wholehearted support to the Secretary-General's proposal for a Special Commission to look at the division of labour right across the United Nations system.

Another way in which the United Nations is out of date is its Security Council. We are all agreed in this Chamber that what was appropriate in 1945 is not what is right in 1997. The world has changed. Most of the countries represented here today did not even exist when the United Nations was formed. The Security Council must move on if it is not to lose its legitimacy. Japan and Germany should both be included in an expanded permanent membership, and there should be a new balance between developed and developing countries in a modernized Security Council. We are all agreed on the need for change; we have been discussing it for four years. It is time that we agreed that a proposal for change which has the backing of the vast majority of Members is better than a status quo which has the backing of none.

It is not just all the countries of the United Nations that must be properly represented, but all the people of those countries. More than half those people are women. Britain welcomes the United Nations willingness to put gender perspective into all areas of its work. The new Labour Government attaches particular importance to strengthening the rights of women. Women do more than half the world's work. They should have equal status in the international organizations of the world.

Let us also put the United Nations finances on a sound basis. Speaker after speaker yesterday referred to the need for us to cooperate to defeat those who make fortunes from organized crime and to contain the drugs trade, second only in value to the oil trade. We cannot defeat those well-resourced menaces to the modern world through a United Nations that staggers from year to year on the verge of bankruptcy.

We need a solution based on the ability to pay. The most equitable means of sharing the burden is to base contributions on share of global gross national product. But that measure will only be accepted as equitable if it is updated regularly to reflect the rapid changes to the world economy. And it is not equitable that some Members pay their contributions while other Members do not. Britain pays in full and on time. Britain expects every Member State, however large or however small, to do the same.

These three issues — institutional reform, Security Council reform and financial reform — are critical to the United Nations future. Let us commit ourselves to progress on all these issues by the end of 1997 and solutions by this time next year. Next time we meet, let us celebrate a modern United Nations that can face the future with confidence, rather than looking back on another year of agreeing about all the questions but not being able to agree on any of the answers. And then the United Nations will be able to get on with its job.

There are three key areas in which the United Nations has a vital job to do — promoting sustainable development, promoting peace and promoting human rights. Those are not separate challenges, but different faces of the same challenge. There can be no real and sustainable development or respect for human rights without peace. And there will be no permanent peace where there is only poverty and injustice.

During every speech this week another 300 children will die before their first birthday, most of them deaths that could be easily and cheaply prevented. If the United Nations is to be relevant to its Members, then more than anything else it must enable people to lift themselves out of poverty.

Britain supports the United Nations aid target. As Britain's contribution to achieving it, the mew Labour Governments has committed itself to reversing the decline in the British aid budget. Britain has also consistently urged faster action in tackling the problem of debt, and at the Commonwealth Finance Ministers meeting in Mauritius last week, British Chancellor Gordon Brown launched a new initiative to cut debt that will benefit 300 million of the world's poorest people and help developing countries escape from the debt trap.

But aid will not alone eliminate poverty. We need to continue breaking down the barriers that deny the poorest countries access to the world's most lucrative markets. We need to make sure that producers in Africa are allowed to sell their goods to Europe and to America as easily as their producers can sell their goods to Africa.

Sustainable development will do more than just reduce poverty. Poverty is also one of the greatest threats to the environment. If we want to preserve the planet for future generations, we must make sure that development respects the environment and does not destroy it. The United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development has made important progress towards this goal. But it is not a task any country can subcontract to the United Nations. We are all in this together. No country can opt out of global warming or fence in its own private climate. We need common action to save our common environment.

The new Labour Government has set itself the ambitious target of reducing Britain's emissions of greenhouse gases by 20 per cent by the year 2010. At the third session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in Kyoto, the nations of the world must sign up to binding targets and then they must keep to them.

The second key goal is peace — preventing conflicts before they happen, helping to end them when they do happen and helping to rebuild lasting peace after conflict. Each of these contributions to peace is equally vital.

But it is the United Nations peacekeeping operations that have the highest profile, and with good reason. The blue berets have prevented worse conflict across the world, from Eastern Slavonia to the Western Sahara. Many have laid down their lives, not in the conduct of war but in the pursuit of peace. The death of a dozen international policemen and envoys, among them a British diplomat, in the United Nations helicopter that crashed in Bosnia last week, was a grim reminder of the risks we ask our peace-builders to take. I pay tribute to their courage and salute them for their professionalism and their skill.

The last area in which the United Nations must focus is human rights. As the world becomes smaller, and news and ideas travel faster, so the principle that certain rights are universal becomes even more compelling. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights sets out the right to freedom from the fear of violence and the right to liberty from the threat of unjust imprisonment. Those are rights to which every citizen of the world irrespective of race, creed or colour. They must not be limited to any one culture or any one continent. As the Secretary-General has pointed out Secretary-General has pointed out, the mothers from every culture weep when their sons and daughters are killed or maimed by repressive rule.

Nor do human rights hinder economic development. The past two decades have demonstrated that political freedom and economic development are not in conflict but are mutually reinforcing. Free societies are efficient economies. Authoritarian rule more often produces economic stagnation. That is why Britain supports the Secretary-General's proposals to integrate human rights into all the work that the United Nations does.

This is my first General Assembly. I attend it with both hope and with anxiety — hope that, if it modernizes, the United Nations can help us face the global challenges of the future; anxiety that, without modernizing, the United Nations will lose legitimacy and its effectiveness.

We must not let that happen. There are too many children stunted by poverty, too many mothers fearful of war, too many people whose basic human rights are being abuse. The United Nations offers them hope. Let us commit ourselves this week to achieving a modern, reformed United Nations that will turn hope into reality.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, His Excellency Mr. Yevgeny Primakov.

Mr. Primakov (Russian Federation) *(interpretation from Russian):* Mr. President, allow me sincerely to congratulate you, a representative of friendly Ukraine, on your election to this responsible and honoured post. We are confident that under your Presidency, the General Assembly will be able to achieve significant results.

In just a little over 800 days, mankind will enter upon the twenty-first century. From a historical point of view, this is indeed no more than a sprinter's lap, and thus the need to look at what lies ahead, at what awaits us, would appear quite natural.

One year ago, in speaking from this rostrum, I spoke about the emerging process of a transition to a multipolar world order. The developments of the past year support that. There is a growing diversity in the political, economic and cultural development of countries. New centres of economic and political influence in the world are shaping up, coupled, at the same time, with increased intermeshing of the interests of different States and peoples.

The horizons opening up to the international community in the twenty-first century are making new demands. These are the assertion of the ideals of interdependency and partnership in inter-State relations; the prevention of the emergence of new dividing lines or exclusive bloc structures; and strict adherence by all to the principles and rules of international law. As a separate issue, I should like to cite not only the creation of conditions for economic and social progress of all countries, but also the maintenance of environmental balance.

There is also a need to mention that the transition from a confrontational bipolar world to a multipolar system per se would not provide a solution to these problems. Furthermore, realistically minded people realize that although we are moving farther away from the simplistic stereotypes of the ideological confrontation era, the number of existing risks and threats in the world is not decreasing.

Regional conflicts continue to be one of the major sources of instability on the global level; they should not be allowed to continue into the twenty-first century. How can this be achieved? A characteristic of our days is the increasing number of intra-State problems — conflicts of an ethnic rather than social nature. There are many multinational States in the world today, and we support the initiatives designed to prevent their forcible disintegration.

The formula for settling such conflicts in today's world — and, of course, in the twenty-first century — can and must combine the need to preserve the territorial integrity of those States with the provision of the maximum possible number of rights to their national minorities. To abandon any of the principles of this two-track formula would result not only in the continuation but in the dangerous escalation of such conflict situations.

Likewise, I wish to draw the Assembly's particular attention to a dangerous aspect of regional conflicts: their ability to trigger terrorist waves and spread them far and wide beyond the borders of the actual conflict zone. For example, many of the militants who launched a bloody campaign of terror in a number of countries emerged out of the ongoing armed conflict that still rages in Afghanistan.

We strongly support the combat against terrorism, whatever trappings it may don, be it in Ireland or in Israel. Today, we will not be able to prevail in this fight without all States pooling their efforts to combat this greatest of evils. While we oppose the backing of terrorism in any form by any Government, we believe that we cannot stigmatize individual Member States forever as international rogues, irrespective of changes in their policies, simply because of their suspected links to terrorists.

In the present-day world, no country can hold a monopoly on any kind of conflict-resolution effort. This fully applies as well to the long-standing conflict in the Middle East, where the settlement process has been stalemated. As the saying goes, "it takes two hands to applaud". Broad-based international efforts are required to undo the taut Middle East knot. Russia, as one of the co-sponsors of the peace process launched in 1991 in Madrid, is prepared actively to cooperate actively with all to attain this goal.

For many years, so too has the Cyprus issue been awaiting the effective international cooperation needed for its resolution.

A synergy of efforts would provide the shortest cut to the resolution of both long-standing and of relatively new conflicts. But our stance by no means implies — and I wish to emphasize this — that any individual country that has influence in a zone of conflict or that can exert it over conflicting parties should not make active use of its own potential. It must do so, however, without putting up a high fence around itself to ward off others.

I should like in this connection to draw the Assembly's attention to Russia's peacekeeping efforts in the Commonwealth of Independent States region. First of all, as concerns Tajikistan, Russia is doing a great deal since we are equipped with the particular tools needed to do the job, in part for historical reasons. Our efforts have proved rather effective. Recently in Moscow an agreement was signed that put an end to the armed strife between the Government and the opposition in that country. The return to Dushanbe of Mr. Nuri, the opposition leader, shows that the agreement is already working.

Nevertheless, we want only our fair share of the deal. We note with satisfaction that the attitudes of Russia and the United Nations towards the parameters of the operation in Tajikistan are in concurrence, based on the close cooperation between the United Nations Observer Mission, the collective Commonwealth of Independent States peacekeeping force, and the contingent of Russian border troops. We welcome the intention of the United Nations to expand the mandate of its observers and to increase their number.

Nagorny Karabakh provides yet another example. Acting on its own, Russia has done a great deal to stabilize the situation in the region. But I believe that we have quite productively cooperated with the United States and France, which, jointly with Russia, are acting as co-chairmen of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Minsk process to settle the Nagorny Karabakh conflict. The Georgian-Abkhaz conflict offers a similar example.

I should now like to say a few words about peacekeeping as a whole. Over the last few years, a trend has been observed towards its decentralization. Naturally, there are objective reasons for this: the financial constraints placed on the United Nations, and the increase in the number of regional organizations working, *inter alia*, in peacekeeping. We see nothing wrong with such decentralization.

However, it is extremely important that peacekeeping activities, whatever their sponsorship, should rely first and foremost on the underlying principles developed within the United Nations framework. We need here to be extremely cautious in dealing with peacekeeping activities. We believe that actions involving force should be carried out solely when authorized by the Security Council and under its direct supervision, as provided for in the Charter of the United Nations.

As we move towards a multipolar world in the twenty-first century, it is essential to create conditions that will bring stability to a new world order. To that end, work must be completed to demolish the hurdles of the past and, above all, the legacy of the massive, decades-long arms race.

We are moving together along this path, and we are determined to proceed further. Together with the United States, we have been steadily reducing our national strategic arsenals. President Yeltsin of Russia and President Clinton of the United States have reached an understanding on the basic parameters for agreement in this area.

On the agenda now are systematic measures for a reduction in the nuclear arsenals of all the nuclear Powers. But let us be perfectly clear here: the stability of a multipolar world cannot be ensured simply by ending the nuclear-arms race of the past. It is also essential to have guarantees against the re-emergence of that arms race on a new basis, and here I have in mind the desire of individual countries to acquire nuclear weapons. This once again proves the need for urgent measures to relieve tensions in the relations between India and Pakistan.

Hence the essential need for the entire international community to give a universal dimension to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Those few countries that have so far remained outside the Treaty must, in our view, come to grips with their responsibility. They must realize that their own security is an integral part of global security, and they must assume those obligations to which over 180 States have already committed themselves as parties to the Treaty.

The entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) on a global scale, as well as the forthcoming talks to ban the production of weapon-grade fissile materials, figures likewise among those badly needed steps intended to impart stability to global security in the twenty-first century.

The implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction is getting under way. We consider this document as one of the major instruments designed to eliminate one of the weapons of mass destruction subject to the greatest proliferation. We have been working together with the deputies of the State Duma to ratify the Convention, and we look forward to the early, successful completion of those efforts.

But even now it is conventional weaponry that is killing people in local conflicts, often in situations where hostilities have already stopped. In this connection, we are fully aware of the humanitarian dimension of the problem of landmines. We think that the elimination of the threat of landmines to people, especially to civilian populations, is long overdue. We advocate active, phased efforts and negotiations to resolve it.

Stability on a global or regional level is impossible without the establishment of security systems. We have made headway in this direction on the European continent. We feel confident that only a universal organization which brings together all the members of the European family of nations can serve as a foundation for a genuinely durable security system in Europe in the twenty-first century. I am talking here about the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). It is first and foremost in the frame of that forum that it is possible to seek agreement with a view to meeting the new and diverse challenges, which are not necessarily of a military and political nature.

A beneficial effect on the improvement of the European climate has already been exerted by the Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Russian Federation, which was born out of the agonizing quest for compromise. This document will have broad international resonance and will doubtless play an essential role in European politics. Of course, the signing of that document has not changed our negative view of NATO's enlargement, which, on the one hand, totally ignores current realities and, on the other, is fraught with the risk of creating new dividing lines.

I must mention yet another contribution to the strengthening of good-neighbourly relations in Europe. I am referring to the agreements signed recently by Russia, Ukraine and Belarus that have allowed our three countries to take major steps forward in developing mutually beneficial, equitable relations which have strengthened stability in the region.

Russia has an interest in the security and stability of its Baltic neighbours and is ready to guarantee their security. Such guarantees could be provided in the form of our commitment backed by an agreement on good-neighbourly relations between Russia and the Baltic States. Such an agreement could become a kind of pact on regional security and stability.

The Asia-Pacific dimension is also of great significance to us. We are convinced that the Russian-Chinese agreements on borders and military détente in the frontier zone, which were also signed by Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, will become a long-term factor for stability in that vast region. Russia also holds a number of other Asian countries — including India, Japan and the States of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) — among its priority partners.

At the same time, our future in the twenty-first century at both the global and the regional levels depends directly on whether the international community will be able to stop and reverse the economic impoverishment of a great number of the Member States of the United Nations.

A central role in resolving the most important tasks facing all the countries of the world today belongs to the United Nations.

Mr. Zacharakis (Cyprus), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Established over half a century ago, the Organization in general has succeeded in passing the durability test, traversed the thorny road of the bloc-confrontation era, survived both the ice-age period and the thaw in international relations. But today this could be viewed as axiomatic — the United Nations needs a rational renovation, referred to by virtually all the speakers in this debate. The substantive report of Secretary-General Kofi Annan gives clear proof of this need. Today, figuratively speaking, the image of this Organization in the twenty-first century is being shaped.

It is our strong conviction that the priority objective of the Organization's reform is to enhance the usefulness of the United Nations. Naturally, it is impossible to reform the United Nations in order to increase its effectiveness without overcoming the financial problems. We must note that the financial problems of the United Nations have unfortunately become chronic. It must therefore be emphasized that the responsibility for the financial health of the United Nations is borne by all Member States and that they must all pay their dues properly.

We are also in favour of expanding the membership of the Security Council. A decision to that effect is long overdue. But this expansion should not render our Organization less efficient.

The reform of the United Nations will take place against the background of the ever increasing role of regional organizations. This is a fully logical process. At the same time, we are convinced that the special leading role of the United Nations among all other universally recognized international organizations must be preserved.

We see the United Nations in the twenty-first century as a highly efficient Organization, free from bureaucratic constraints, and as a proactive Organization capable of swiftly responding to the challenges of the contemporary world.

I began my remarks by encouraging concerted action by the international community to concentrate on current problems and on the prospects for the coming century. And I shall conclude by citing a well-known saying: "Pessimists are no more than casual observers, it is the optimists who can change the world". We are optimists, and we believe that the United Nations will be able to play a positive role in the ongoing evolution of the international community.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Valdis Birkavs, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Latvia.

Mr. Birkavs (Latvia): Allow me to congratulate the President on his election and express my confidence in his leadership during a crucially important session of the General Assembly. I wish to assure him that Latvia's past experience of fruitful bilateral cooperation with Ukraine will guide the delegation of Latvia in pursuit of our common tasks at this session of the Assembly.

I wish to recognize with gratitude Ambassador Razali Ismail of Malaysia for his determined leadership during the fifty-first session of the Assembly, as well as of its General Committee, of which Latvia was a member.

At the outset I will address the need for United Nations reform, follow that with a response to the reform proposals of the Secretary-General, and, finally, inform the Assembly about Latvia's recent experiences with reforms.

Recent history suggests why reforming our Organization is essential. In 1945 many delegates to the founding conference of our Organization travelled to San Francisco by train and by sea. Delegates to the fifty-second session of the General Assembly have travelled to New York by air. They communicate with their capitals by very fast electronic means that did not exist 50 years ago. These advances in the technology of travel and information have facilitated an enormous and continuing expansion of international activities by ever greater numbers of State and non-State actors.

Most important for the United Nations is the expansion of international activities by state actors other than members of foreign services. The participants in these transgovernmental activities come from many governmental institutions: the courts, police, central banks and regulatory agencies.

State as well as non-State actors form successful transnational organizations that are independent of the United Nations system. These organizations can be competitors and cooperating partners for the United Nations. A United Nations that does not continually evolve to offer a coherent response to changing global conditions is a United Nations that risks becoming irrelevant.

The world needs a United Nations that can contribute effectively to the solution of complex global problems, such as those caused by the three-fold increase since 1945 of both the global population and the number of independent States. It needs a United Nations that will be a leader in the shaping of a new and workable international political order to fill the place vacated by the bipolar order of the cold-war era. This will be done best by a United Nations with universal membership.

Latvia believes that the package of reform proposals which the Secretary-General has presented to this Assembly contains measures which will enable the United Nations to respond to the imperative of organizational evolution. Latvia views this package as a work in progress, rather than as completed reform proposals for the long term. But even if the proposals are imperfect or not complete, they are the best this Assembly has before it. Latvia will support the reform package as a good springboard for reform and hopes that other Member States will do the same.

During the next few months, the General Assembly and the Secretary-General will need to work together to begin the process of implementing the reform package. The Secretary-General will have to report regularly to Member States on the progress of the reforms. He will have to develop implementation plans for recommendations approved, on the basis of informed considerations, by the General Assembly and other United Nations organs. This Assembly will have to elaborate further the procedure for addressing the proposals of the Secretary-General. It may wish to decide on additional reforms. Latvia expects that lessons will be learned during the implementation of the reform proposals and that the lessons will suggest mid-course corrections, improvements and even termination of some elements in the package.

Let me now turn to several substantive aspects of reform that may touch upon the Secretary-General's reform package, but are not a part of it.

The success of reform depends upon a sound financial footing for the Organization. In this regard, three recent interconnected processes may be noted. These processes are, first, rapid changes since 1991 in peacekeeping budgets and a basically unchanging regular budget; secondly, reform of the assessment methodology under way since 1994; and, thirdly and most important, recent unprecedented increases in overdue outstanding contributions.

The interdependence of these three processes means that the General Assembly will have to work out ways to treat the three processes as parts of a whole. It is also necessary that the Assembly make decisions that assure a genuine movement towards achieving a sound financial situation within a few years at most.

In regard to the very difficult question of Security Council reform, Latvia wishes to reiterate its continued support for an expansion of the Council that would result in more equitable geographical and small-state representation.

Latvia believes that the mixed outcomes of the complex post-cold-war peacekeeping operations initiated by the Security Council may have relevance to the reform of the Council. Learning how to improve the success rate of these operations could have the side benefit of pointing towards Security Council reforms that might improve the maintenance of international peace and security.

Latvia has a special interest in the future of United Nations peacekeeping operations, since the Baltic Battalion (BALTBAT), in which Latvians serve side by side with Estonians and Lithuanians, has completed a successful year of learning to cooperate and interface. This has been done while participating in a multinational operation: the Stabilization Force (SFOR) peacekeeping mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina. BALTBAT, which has been trained and equipped with the help and encouragement of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Nordic partners of the Baltic States, corresponds to their standards and has become fully operational.

In view of the growth of crimes that escape national punishment or that cross national borders, Latvia fully supports the establishment of an independent, efficient and authoritative international criminal court with independent prosecution. We consider this to be the most important development in international law since the creation of the International Court of Justice. Latvia intends to participate actively in the completion of the establishment of the court in 1998.

In regard to reforms in Latvia, it may be noted at the outset that they are driven by the need to overcome the consequences of 50 years of occupation, which caused the political, economic and social development of Latvia to fall behind its Nordic neighbours. In its sixth year of restored independence, Latvia continues with reforms designed to catch up with its Nordic neighbours. Latvia wishes to build a solidly democratic foundation for long-term economic and social well-being.

In this endeavour, Latvia receives international assistance from many sources. One source is the United Nations system, cooperation with which — primarily with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) — has contributed significantly to the improvement of social and economic well-being in Latvia. The United Nations presence in Latvia began in 1992 with an integrated office under the leadership of a resident coordinator who is also the UNDP representative. The integrated office, essentially a United Nations House, has allowed cost-effective access to the technical assistance offered by any part of the United Nations system. In addition, UNDP mobilizes bilateral and multilateral donors for projects in which it participates. I wish to express my deepest gratitude to UNDP and the donors who have made contributions to Latvia's reform projects.

I will now focus on reforms in only three of the areas that have an impact on social well-being and in which UNDP and the donors it has mobilized have been involved.

The first area is human rights. Although at its last session the Assembly concluded its consideration of the question of human rights in Latvia and Estonia, I believe that a brief report on some human rights developments during this year may nevertheless be of interest at this session.

Latvia cooperates with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Centre for Human Rights. Recently Latvia made a financial contribution — its first voluntary contribution ever to any United Nations body — in support of work by the Commissioner's staff on national human rights institutions.

The Latvian National Human Rights Office, established in 1995 as an independent national institution, has begun to have a tangible impact, particularly on the rights of vulnerable social groups. The somewhat unprecedented powers and functions of the Office have generated considerable interest in other central and eastern European countries. The Office has received UNDP technical and financial assistance at all stages of its conception, planning and development.

On 4 June 1997 Latvia ratified the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights, thus providing new legal guarantees to its residents, including the right of individual complaint and compulsory jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights. Human rights were further strengthened through adoption of the Law on Refugees and Asylum Seekers and ratification of the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.

Another area affecting social well-being and integration is language training offered to the relatively large segment of the population that lacks a knowledge of Latvian, the State language. The Government of Latvia approved the National Programme for Latvian Language Training in 1995. Since then the Programme has completed the training of a core body of teachers. Textbooks and teacher handbooks have been published.

The third area relevant to social well-being is support for the re-emergence of civil society. Since the time of national reawakening 10 years ago, almost 3,000 non-governmental organizations have been established in Latvia. The first major national non-governmental-organization forum will take place in Riga this weekend. I note that its organizers have received valuable assistance from the UNDP office in Latvia.

With regard to economic well-being, the Government has worked hard to achieve macroeconomic stability during the transition process from a centrally planned to an efficient market economy. As a result, economic growth has resumed and inflation has decreased dramatically. Real gross-domestic-product growth for 1997 is estimated at 4 per cent. By June of this year inflation had declined to about 7.5 per cent on an annual basis. These achievements are accompanied by continuing economic hardship for large segments of the population. Social welfare and poverty-alleviation projects are aimed at decreasing these hardships.

Latvia intends to apply the lessons learned from its reform experiences to its work as a member of the Economic and Social Council. One general lesson learned in Latvia is that the results of reforms include not only benefits but also costs. The cost hardest to bear is probably insecurity about the ultimate outcome of reforms.

We, the reformers of the United Nations, will surely have to bear the cost of insecurity as well. Perhaps a bit of ancient wisdom can diminish the insecurity. The Roman philosopher and Emperor Marcus Aurelius, in his *Meditations*, asked three questions about reforms:

> "Is any man afraid of change? Why, what can take place without change? What then is more pleasing or suitable"

than change?

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nigeria, His Excellency Chief Tom Ikimi.

Chief Ikimi (Nigeria): There is an overwhelming air of expectancy across the world as we gather at this fifty-second session of the General Assembly. It is hoped that the events of this session over the next few weeks will present a new vision for our Organization. The success of this session will depend upon Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, the Foreign Minister of Ukraine and current President of this Assembly. His reputation for excellence and hard work assures us all that under his presidency, the affairs of this session will be well ordered.

May I therefore take this opportunity, on behalf of my Head of State, General Sani Abacha, and the Government and the people of Nigeria, to extend to him our congratulations on his election. Let me also avail myself of this opportunity to extend to his predecessor, Ambassador Razali of Malaysia, our praises and high esteem for the purposeful and dynamic leadership he gave to the General Assembly during the past year.

My delegation notes with satisfaction the excellent manner in which our Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, has settled down to his onerous tasks and conducted the affairs of our Organization since he took office. He has demonstrated through his reform proposals his capacity to lead the United Nations into the twenty-first century. We will continue to extend to him our fullest cooperation and support.

As we gather here to contemplate the present state of our world, it is tempting to be optimistic that the United Nations will provide a solution to the problems of nations. The truth however, is that all around the world lies evidence of the Organization's unfinished tasks, and even of some of its failures to meet mankind's hopes and aspirations. Nonetheless, the fact that Member States continue to participate in the annual sessions of the General Assembly signifies that the search for peace and the pursuit of development are indeed ongoing processes. There still subsists an abiding faith in the United Nations and the willingness on the part of all of us to continue to strive for a better and more peaceful world.

That is why many nations have come here from time to time seeking understanding for their individual travails, believing passionately that here they would find accommodation and support. Many of them have returned home disappointed, confounded by the realities of today's world, as they come to terms with the awesome power wielded by the strong against the weak. We must remain mindful that international relations represent a complex mix of national circumstances and the demands and dictates of a changing external environment. International relations must be based on a perceived goal of the common good, on mutual respect for sovereignty and on accommodation and consideration for national circumstances and sensitivities. The United Nations must therefore continue to serve as the bulwark against the imposition of the will of the strong on that of the weak.

No nation ever addresses this body without a point of view peculiarly its own. We all come here with our histories, our cultures and our traditions, which give meaning and substance to the values we seek to impart to this Organization. In the case of my country, Nigeria, we have the added burden of manifest destiny. While we did not choose our destiny, we welcome its concomitant obligations and opportunities. For it is destiny, not national ambition, that motivates us in the discharge of our responsibilities.

In this regard, we see in the predicament of each troubled African State a mirror image of ourselves and a call to duty to render assistance in the best tradition of African brotherhood. Our exertions on behalf of regional and subregional peace and security arise from the circumstances of our history as the largest black nation on earth and the fortunate circumstances of our bountiful endowment. It is our destiny that we are home to one of every four Africans and one of every five blacks on earth. How could we be indifferent to the plight of the black race? It is our unshakeable destiny to champion the promotion and defence of the rights of all black people in Africa and in the diaspora. So, let no one imagine that we have only just embraced our peacekeeping role, because, as is well known, we nurse no expansionist or hegemonistic interests. We simply cannot be indifferent to the plight of our brothers in other African States when their lives are imperilled.

Since our admission to the United Nations on 7 October 1960, we have given a firm indication of our country's determination to chart an independent course in world affairs and also to resolutely defend the interests of Africa. When, for example, an atomic device was detonated in the Sahara in 1960, Nigeria did not hesitate to express its disapproval by breaking diplomatic relations with the country concerned. Furthermore, we are proud to have been part of the effort that brought about the formation of the Organization of African Unity in 1963. We have since spared no effort to ensure the survival of that continental Organization. We were also in the vanguard of the struggle for the total liberation of Africa from colonial domination and of the campaign to eradicate apartheid in South Africa. We regarded the apartheid system as an affront to the dignity of the black race.

Similarly, our contributions to United Nations peacekeeping operations span nearly three and a half decades. Starting with the Congo in 1960, we have committed in excess of a quarter of a million troops to United Nations peacekeeping efforts. They have been variously deployed to preserve peace and security in our own region and elsewhere around the globe, including in Bosnia, Cambodia and Lebanon.

At the inception of our Organization over half a century ago, its founding fathers captured, in the preamble to the Charter, a vision and an expectation of saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war. It was hoped that a global order would emerge in which humanity would live at peace with itself and nations would be able to cooperate in furtherance of peace and security. In spite of the end of the cold war, which for many years was perceived as the main obstacle to the realization of United Nations goals, our world is still largely unsafe, insecure and unstable.

The threat of nuclear war still truly exists. This makes it imperative that the total elimination of nuclear weapons remains a priority item on the United Nations agenda. Over and above the threat posed by nuclear weapons, there has been a proliferation of inter-State and intra-State conflicts with attendant negative consequences for global peace and security. In Central Europe, Asia and in our continent, Africa, these conflicts have devastated societies, resulting in millions of refugees and displaced persons. Africa is the area worst affected by these conflicts.

The United Nations has primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. However, it also recognizes the crucial role which regional and subregional organizations may play in the realization of these objectives. It was in the light of this recognition that the 16 countries of the West African subregion launched, in 1990, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) to address the conflict in Liberia, which at the time was rightly perceived as a threat not only to the corporate existence of a Member State but, indeed, to peace and security in the entire subregion.

As a result of the firm resolve of the leaders of ECOWAS and the determination of ECOMOG, coupled with the enhanced material and logistic support received from friendly countries within and outside the subregion, the disarmament of the warring factions was successfully accomplished as scheduled, on 31 January 1997. An environment of peace and security was then established throughout Liberia. It then became possible for free and fair legislative and presidential elections to be held as scheduled, on 19 July 1997. On 2 August this year, His Excellency Mr. Charles Ghankay Taylor was installed as

President of Liberia. That event brought to an end a sad chapter in the history of Liberia. As Nigeria is currently chairing ECOWAS, we take this opportunity to convey to the international community our profound appreciation for its support and assistance in bringing the Liberian conflict to a successful end.

It is ironic that as peace came to Liberia events in neighbouring Sierra Leone took a turn for the worse, following the violent overthrow of the legitimate Government of President Tejan Kabbah by a section of that country's military on 25 May 1997. That action was characterized by massive looting and wanton destruction of lives and property. Vital national assets, including the Central Bank, were looted and burnt down. Virtually all embassies and residences were either looted or vandalized by the ravaging group of coup plotters now in Freetown. All diplomatic missions have since evacuated Sierra Leone.

These developments have been roundly condemned by the OAU, the United Nations and the international community. It is encouraging that no foreign Government or organization has to date given recognition or support to the regime in Freetown. We urge that this position be maintained.

Meanwhile, ECOWAS has spared no effort in seeking a peaceful resolution of the problem created in Sierra Leone. At Conakry, in June 1997, ECOWAS objectives were defined to include: first, the early reinstatement of the legitimate Government of President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah; secondly, the return of peace and security; and, thirdly, the resolution of the issues of refugees and displaced persons. Accordingly, ECOWAS adopted a combination of three strategies, namely dialogue and negotiations, sanctions and embargo, and the possible use of force. A mechanism to monitor and implement the ECOWAS response to the situation in Sierra Leone was established, comprising four countries: Nigeria, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana. During the last ECOWAS summit, held recently at Abuja, the committee was expanded to five with the addition of Liberia, and was raised to the status of Heads of State.

At that same summit, additional measures were imposed on the illegal regime in order to strengthen the negotiation process towards the peaceful resolution of the crisis in Sierra Leone. ECOMOG was mandated to oversee the implementation of these measures. In pursuing this goal of the peaceful resolution of the Sierra Leone crisis, we seek the support of the international community.

Africa has of late witnessed a series of inter-State conflicts which have in some cases led either to the disintegration of some countries or to the total collapse of central government authority. Consequently, many well-meaning members of the international community have tried to propose solutions for prevention and resolution of conflicts in Africa. Regrettably, these various initiatives have not only been made outside the framework of the United Nations, but, more seriously, have tended to ignore the existing framework and mechanisms within the African continent. Yet it is obvious that the existing mechanisms at both the subregional and the continental levels have demonstrated a proven capacity to resolve African problems. ECOWAS, the Southern African Development Community and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development have all established a reputation as viable instruments for conflict resolution. Of course, most of the regional and subregional bodies require material and logistical support from the United Nations as well as from individual members of the international community.

Nigeria believes that no initiative, however well intentioned, can succeed in resolving conflicts if it is not discussed and adopted within the framework of the OAU Central Organ's Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution. Accordingly, we recommend that all current initiatives should be first channelled through the existing organs of the OAU.

It is our view that national sovereignty and the fundamental rights of the individual are not necessarily mutually exclusive, provided a proper balance is struck. Indeed, they can be mutually reinforcing. The problem arises when, either deliberately or inadvertently, the prerogative of sovereignty is made subject to the absolute rights of the individual. This is a disservice both to the cause of freedom and to the true purpose of democracy. What is required in the interest both of the State and of the enhancement of human rights is a proper recognition that the right of the individual only begins at the point where the sovereign right of the State terminates. We must resist the attempt in some quarters to use human rights as a ploy to engage in activities designed to undermine the sovereignty of some Member States in the United Nations family.

Two years ago, the present Administration in my country announced a programme of return to civil rule. Since then, commendable progress has been made in the implementation of that programme. We are encouraged by the successful outcome of the elections held so far and of the processes which we have undertaken to ensure a successful transition. The rest of the programme is firmly on course. We remain firmly confident that all the processes entailed in the transition programme will be completed on schedule, by 1 October 1998.

We have always given due recognition and appreciation to all friendly countries in the international system which have shown genuine concern for and understanding of the complexities of the Nigerian situation. After all, in 1960 we as a country willingly embraced the Westminster model of Government put in place by the departing colonial Power. That system took little or no account of our traditional institutions, or indeed of our customs and cultures. Indeed, that system collapsed after six years. In 1979, my country, being more adventurous, looked far across the Atlantic Ocean and adopted the presidential system of government. However, the cost of running the system placed a huge burden on our country's economy. Not surprisingly, that system too collapsed after five years.

Today, no one can blame us as a country for searching for a system of government best suited for Nigeria, a system which takes into account the realities of our nation. You may call it by whatever name, but the peace, stability, development and good governance of our people remains uppermost in our minds.

At 37, Nigeria is by all standards a relatively young nation. Even those countries that have been nations for centuries and have inherited relatively stable societies are still grappling with the complexities of nationhood and experimenting with new formulas to cope with the exigencies of state. They were not present when their forefathers, who also fought bitter civil wars, struggled to hand them their present inheritance. They should therefore show greater understanding for those of us engaged at this time in the arduous task of forging new and stable societies from the ruins of colonialism.

If Nigeria appears concerned and indeed preoccupied with the vital issues of peace and stability at home, in West Africa and in Africa as a whole, it is because we are convinced that the urgent demands of socio-economic development cannot be effectively tackled without peace and stability. Nigeria believes that peace and stability in Africa will facilitate the channelling of our limited resources into the critical areas of political, social and economic development. Consequently, since the end of our civil war in 1970, we have embarked on a deliberate and substantial reduction of the Nigerian armed forces from a strength of 500,000 in all ranks to the barely 100,000 that it is today. This has resulted in a corresponding reduction in military expenditure.

Security considerations have sometimes compelled countries to allocate a disproportionate share of their national budgets to military expenditure. This has had the effect of reducing resources available for development. The end of the cold war had raised hopes that substantial resources would be available in the form of a peace dividend for development. Unfortunately, the proliferation of regional conflicts and civil wars has led even the United Nations into allocating enormous resources for peacekeeping and conflict resolution, thus weakening its capacity to fulfil its Charter obligations regarding social and economic development.

Since its establishment 52 years ago, the United Nations has served as an instrument for implementing a global agenda of a diverse, complex and pressing nature. As has been evident from the debates that have taken place in the General Assembly, no one today can deny the need for and the urgency of reform.

In this regard, the Secretary-General has now made a number of proposals, in addition to the ongoing efforts of the General Assembly on the subject of reform. My delegation will actively participate in the consideration of these proposals. In doing so, it is important to stress that the outcome should encompass and take on board the views and interests of all Member States.

The reforms of the United Nations, as proposed for the Secretariat, the General Assembly and the specialized agencies, would be incomplete without a corresponding reform of the Security Council. A reform of the Council would entail a restructuring and expansion of its membership in both categories to take account of, among other things, the increased membership of our Organization and the need to reflect the interests of all the constituent regions.

Happily, there is now broad agreement on the need for the expansion of the membership of the Security Council in both categories. With almost a third of the membership of the United Nations, Africa should have adequate representation in an expanded Security Council. At the thirty-third summit of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) held in Harare, Zimbabwe, last June, leaders of Africa reaffirmed the need for the region to have two permanent seats with full veto powers. Nigeria considers this demand legitimate and well deserved.

We stand here today as guardians of the heritage of our cherished Organization, even as we gaze at the future horizon and the dawning of the new millennium. The vision we harbour about the future of the United Nations is inevitably conditioned by the objective realities of the present and the vigour with which we shall pursue the hopes and challenges of the new millennium.

It is within our means and our grasp to make the next 50 years of the United Nations different, more exciting and generally more beneficial to the world at large. We can plead no alibi or extenuating circumstances should we fail to do so. For, unlike in San Francisco, when nearly two thirds of the present membership of the United Nations did not participate in the creation of the bold new world, this time around, we, all 185 nations at the United Nations, are the world, and we are present at the reordering of the new international world order, as envisaged by the reform proposals of the United Nations and its organs. We should take the opportunity to establish a revamped United Nations of shared values and interests and to promote a greater equality of States.

Students of history will bear testimony to the fact that over the centuries, centres of power and influence have shifted constantly from one part of the world to another. The rise and fall of great empires has been a constant phenomenon in human history. A gale wind of change is now blowing across the globe. My country, Nigeria, identifies with that change, which inevitably will result in new centres of power and influence. It is not to be imagined that any one continent will forever remain at the periphery of the emerging new world order.

The millennium bell tolls for the nations of the world as we await the dawning of the new age. We must not shirk our responsibility for the regeneration of the United Nations. We are the world. Let us, from this historic Hall, reaffirm our faith in humankind. Let our dream come true for a new and vibrant inner vision that will light our paths into the next century. Now is the time; as the late Mother Teresa so gently reminded us,

> "Tomorrow has not yet come, yesterday is already gone, and we have only today — let us begin".

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.

United Nations A/52/PV.8

General Assembly

Fifty-second Session

Official Records

8th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 23 September 1997, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Udovenko .... (Ukraine)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Address by Mr. Juan Carlos Wasmosy, President of the Republic of Paraguay

The President: The Assembly will first hear an address by the President of the Republic of Paraguay.

Mr. Juan Carlos Wasmosy, President of the Republic of Paraguay, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Paraguay, His Excellency Mr. Juan Carlos Wasmosy, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Wasmosy (*interpretation from Spanish*): It is a great honour for me to address this great Assembly in my capacity as President of the Republic of Paraguay. I take this opportunity to express my deepest thanks to the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko. Also, I would note the excellent work done by Ambassador Razali Ismail, who so efficiently guided the work of the last session. In addition, I should like to extend my best wishes to Mr. Kofi Annan, in connection with his responsibilities as he exercises his functions as Secretary-General of the Organization.

For the people of Paraguay, throughout the long struggle to acquire and strengthen their democratic institutions, the United Nations has always been a universal forum that ensures the free debate of ideas and the participation of all the peoples of the world, without exclusion or discrimination, the vital issues involving development, equity, the maintenance of peace and the preservation of the environment.

Because of the great importance my country attaches to this forum, we recognize the urgent need to support the institutional reform of the United Nations by strengthening the General Assembly and democratizing the Security Council — adding both permanent and non-permanent members — so that this institution will be able to respond appropriately to the new challenges facing the international community.

Last August last I had the great honour of chairing in Asunción the eleventh summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Permanent Mechanism for Consultation and Policy Coordination — the Rio Group — the members of which are Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Guyana, Honduras, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela. There a Declaration was adopted on the strengthening of the United Nations and the reform of Security Council, stressing certain principles and guidelines that I shall now describe.

The Declaration of Asunción expresses, first, full support for multilateralism, sovereign equality of States and steadfast respect for the rule of law.

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

Second, it expresses support for the Secretary-General's initiative in putting forward a broad programme for reform, presented on 16 July of this year, particularly reforms designed to strengthen the effectiveness of the Secretariat and to emphasize activities to promote economic and social development.

Third, it notes the relevance of the process of increasing the membership of the Security Council and to reforming it to correct the imbalances in its current membership, improve its decision-making mechanisms, make it more transparent so that it will reflect in a more legitimate and representative manner the overall membership of the Organization.

Fourth, it states that, because of its legal traditions and contribution to the cause of peace, the Latin American and Caribbean region should be given special consideration in any proposal to increase the membership of the Security Council.

Fifth, it expresses the conviction that reform of the Security Council must respect the principles of equitable geographical distribution and the sovereign equality of States, and that any reform that entails discrimination by developed countries against developing countries would be unacceptable.

Sixth, it expresses the ideal of moving towards the total elimination of the veto and, as a first step, limiting its use to actions taken under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter.

Seventh, it expresses the importance of transparency in management and decision-making in the Security Council and increasing the number of open meetings and orientation meetings at which the Secretary-General or his special representatives present reports.

Eighth, it considers that the increase in the Security Council's membership, the reform of its working methods and the question of the veto are integral parts of Council reform and must be addressed in the same agreement.

Ninth, it expresses the explicit resolve of our Governments to continue to participate actively in the Working Group in order to reach general agreement on this matter.

Let me say once again that this increase in the permanent and non-permanent membership of the Council must necessarily envisage the presence of Latin America and the Caribbean and other geographical groups without any form of discrimination whatsoever. In this connection, Paraguay reaffirms its support for permanent membership for Brazil, Germany and Japan.

It is also important to note that the process of reforming the Organization must include a plan to eliminate unnecessary expenditures and an attempt to merge programmes designed to further the development of our peoples, which will lead to an optimum utilization of available resources as well as to the elimination of duplication in the use of human, technical or economic resources. The serious financial problems of the United Nations deserve sincere and determined consideration.

I am pleased to say that my country has always, in so far as it has been able, honoured its international commitments, aware that the Organization's proper functioning requires the appropriate and equitable distribution of its administrative costs among all Member States.

This moment in history is indeed a very special one. Alliances are now being replaced by complementarity. Isolationism and confrontation have given way to globalization and cooperation. We no longer speak of rivalry and struggle but, rather, of honest and creative competition. The asymmetries in the world order that have historically meant that some nations have been subordinate to others are now themselves being subordinated to this influx of solidarity and mutual assistance.

It is of course true that many serious conflict areas continue to exist, but Paraguay is pleased to note the commendable efforts that the United Nations has made in the maintenance of peace in various areas of tension, and we have followed closely the Organization's initiatives in such new areas of conflict as Cambodia and Sierra Leone, for whose peoples my country most sincerely wishes the immeasurable benefits of peace and harmony.

We have also followed with keen interest the disturbing developments in the Middle East situation, and we urge the parties there to redouble their efforts to seek a lasting and stable peace. We warmly welcome the actions taken by the mediating nations, which untiringly continue to participate in all negotiations.

With regard to the particular case of the Republic of China on Taiwan, Paraguay welcomes the attitude adopted by that country's Government and expresses its hope that there will be movement towards reconciliation and that it will be possible to resolve the differences with the People's Republic of China.

In keeping with the principle of the universality of the United Nations, all States that meet the requirements set forth in the Charter have the right to seek admission or membership. In this respect, we believe that it would be advisable to reconsider General Assembly resolution 2758 (XXVI), which completely denies the 21 million inhabitants of the Republic of China on Taiwan the fundamental right to participate in international organizations and their activities.

The challenges of peace, security and equilibrium are more relevant to us today than ever before, and they are an absolute imperative for building a world that guarantees development to nations in a context of universal harmony.

On the crucial issue of world disarmament, allow me to reiterate Paraguay's position of support for United Nations efforts in this sphere. My country welcomes optimistically the preparatory work for the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to be held in the year 2000, hoping that by then the Treaty will have become universal. That Treaty, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the efforts of States to reduce their arsenals and the establishment of new nuclear-weapon-free zones are all important elements that will help prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and eventually achieve general and complete nuclear disarmament.

True to its pacifist principles, the Republic of Paraguay has been following the Ottowa process with great interest. We recently took part in the Oslo Diplomatic Conference, which adopted the definitive text of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, and we supported the majority position of the principal States to seek appropriate and effective legal mechanisms to prohibit the manufacture, use and distribution of the cruel devices of death and pain that are anti-personnel landmines.

We congratulate the international community on that decisive step, and we reaffirm our unswerving decision to sign the Convention. We urge other Governments to do the same without any doubt or delay, so as to ensure its earliest possible entry into force.

I should also like to reaffirm my country's unswerving commitment to continue the struggle against terrorism, a destabilizing force that negates human rights and threatens to undermine the very foundations of security in our regions.

It is fitting here to stress that Paraguay, along with the entire international community, is concerned about the growth of drug trafficking. We therefore firmly reiterate the Paraguayan people's determination to combat that scourge and its resolve to take integrated and concerted action, within the context of international cooperation and in conjunction with producing, transit and consuming countries.

In this connection, I am pleased to inform the Assembly that in October 1996 my country's Parliament, at the initiative of the Executive, adopted a law that establishes norms and punishments for the crime of laundering money or goods derived from illicit traffic in narcotics, psychotropic substances or dangerous drugs, thereby significantly improving the legal framework for combating such crimes head on.

On 10 December 1998 we shall celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a major landmark in the history of humankind and its endless struggle to ensure dignity and reciprocity among human beings. Much of what we have achieved along the way has been the product of blood and pain, but with due satisfaction we can now confirm that the principles and objectives of the Declaration are increasingly being put into effect and that the concept of a State based on the rule of law is gradually becoming part of our national realities. Moreover, the new culture of democratic solidarity has managed convincingly to combat any aspirations for a return to anachronistic times in our political history characterized by authoritarianism and the denial of human rights.

For Paraguay, the road to freedom and the establishment of an institutional basis which sits well with our republican ideals has been long. During this journey, my Government has helped make the dream of every Paraguayan a reality: the establishment of a system guaranteeing full freedom and a strengthened democracy allowing the peaceful transfer of the presidential mandate to another candidate, elected by the people, who will take up the office of President of the Republic in August 1998.

This is in keeping with the undeniable achievements of the World Conference on Human Rights held in Vienna in 1993, which reaffirmed the universality and indivisibility of human rights, while recommending that greater attention be paid to the links between democracy, development and the satisfaction of the basic needs of the most disadvantaged sectors of the population.

My Government has therefore tried to strengthen the interrelationship between democracy, development and human rights, thus combining these democratic achievements, through a plan for social action designed to create opportunities so that all citizens, through their own efforts, can enjoy all the benefits of human development.

Obviously, a central feature of democratic governance is concern for social problems. If our democracies do not adapt to these new realities, not only will they be impossible to govern, but they will remain on the sidelines of history. Even worse, that all the sacrifices made to strengthen our institutions may have to yield to populist and Messianic pressures.

I am pleased to state today that my Government has been able to lay the foundations for true development, without making any Messianic promises or pandering to the populists. I should highlight the significant progress made in the institutional framework of this process, with electoral reform that has enabled us to move satisfactorily through all the stages of the democratic schedule. Equally historic is the balance achieved in civil and military relations, following the successes of April 1996, when popular pressure and the enormous weight of solidarity on the continent thwarted attempts to take us back to outdated forms of autocracy.

I am convinced that our fledgling democracy has gathered new strength since those events and that it will be an insuperable obstacle to any attempts to bring down our institutions. Furthermore, the changes to the administration of justice, with a multiparty Supreme Court, prevent any manipulation or distortion of the mechanisms laid down by the Constitution and the laws of the Republic.

Management by parliament has become part of the process of joint cooperation in government, and this has been an enriching experience in the democratic life of the country.

Paraguay has a young population which is eager to learn. Current and future generations must be able to equate a free economy with democracy and democracy with a State based on the rule of law, with guarantees for human dignity.

During the Eleventh Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Rio Group, which was held in my country, I spoke enthusiastically about the need for a bold strategy to back up the ideals of democracy, sustainable development, equity and integration, and placed particular emphasis on what I called "education for democracy".

The training of young people in this emerging world must include guidelines based on sound ethical and doctrinaire principles. The young must be given experience in how to handle modern technological tools, so that they can deal with the requirements of the new political, economic and social processes which are defining the current and future development of our nations.

Further thought needs to be given to the environmental issue. Five years after the Rio Conference, the Republic of Paraguay is building on the increasing awareness of the need to preserve the ecosystem, whose priority nature is reflected in the 1992 Constitution. But I must also emphasize how urgent it is to give full effect to the principle of common but differentiated responsibility put forward in Rio. If it is to be valid, this principle must enjoy the support of richer countries in terms of financial and technical assistance, so that we can put an end once and for all to the "ecology of poverty" which forces many sectors of poor countries to destroy their environmental basis with the simple and tragic aim of ensuring their subsistence from day to day.

I have every reason to be satisfied that my Government has been able to institutionalize various instruments to improve the quality of the environment in our country — in particular, the strategy for managing, using, preserving and protecting natural resources in the context of the programme for change in Agenda 21, whose basic aim it is to strengthen the process of sustainable development.

Highlights of the new environmental legislation now in force include laws on evaluating the environmental impact, on wildlife, on protected rural areas and on penalties for ecological offences. In the context of the Agenda for Change, we are ratifying international agreements, and taking account of the importance of international cooperation on the environment. With regard to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious

Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa, we submitted the legal instrument for ratifying the instrument in January this year. In this context, the countries that share the *Gran Chaco Americano* — Paraguay, Bolivia and Argentina — have entered into a new relationship based on a model of cooperation for sustainable development in this vast region.

There is an old saying that nobody is so rich that he does not need anything and nobody is so poor that he has nothing to give. In line with those words of wisdom, every Member State of this Organization has given and received. In the particular case of Paraguay, I have to point out that international cooperation has played a decisive role, and its true dimensions can therefore be assessed and appreciated. For this reason, I am particularly grateful to the United Nations, whose presence in Paraguay, through its various specialized agencies, has been and continues to be so positive and dynamic.

Just over six years ago the Argentine Republic, Brazil, Paraguay and the Eastern Republic of Uruguay, and later, the Republic of Chile and the Republic of Bolivia, as associated members of the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR), decided to cooperate in a spirit of solidarity in order to gain an increasingly advantageous position in this globalized and dynamic world. In that context we have reached undeniably relevant milestones for the present and future of our peoples.

Today, it is recognized that in MERCOSUR we are on the right path, and we are receiving an encouraging message from the outside world concerning our integration. Our efforts are focused on trying to establish a common market, within a gradual and continuous process in which the basic stages still need to be rounded off, improved and studied in depth.

MERCOSUR's experience is expanding. This is an important regional bloc. We have opened negotiations with the Andean Community and the United Mexican States, and we hope that by the end of this year agreements will be signed allowing for trade preferences in the region. Moreover, MERCOSUR participates in the Free Trade Area of the Americas, and there are proposals to conclude shortly a hemispheric free trade initiative involving the 34 countries of the Americas.

MERCOSUR is also expanding towards the European Union. We are making progress in defining political decisions which would encourage the establishment of a free trade zone between the two customs unions.

This has been my third address to the General Assembly as President of the Republic of Paraguay. I am here today to reconfirm on behalf of my country — a founding Member of the United Nations — our commitment to the lofty ideals that inspire us. Our Organization needs to be adapted and reformed so as to be able to respond effectively to the major challenges of the next millennium. Paraguay undertakes to make its contribution to attaining those noble objectives.

At this very special moment I warmly embrace the Assembly, not only in the name of my people, but also on behalf of myself, Juan Carlos Wasmosy, a citizen with faith in democracy, struggled for his country's freedom and won.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Paraguay for the statement he has just made.

> *Mr. Juan Carlos Wasmosy, President of the Republic of Paraguay, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

The President: I call first on His Excellency, Mr. Keizo Obuchi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan.

Mr. Obuchi (Japan) (spoke in Japanese; interpretation furnished by the delegation): I should like at the outset to extend my warmest compliments to His Excellency Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, Foreign Minister of Ukraine, on his assumption last week of the presidency of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. Japan will cooperate closely with him for the success of this session.

> *Mr. Mohammed, Ethiopia, Vice-President, took the Chair.*

I should also like to pay sincere tribute to His Excellency Mr. Razali Ismail, who, as President of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly, demonstrated active initiative for strengthening the functions of the United Nations through reform. Japan earnestly hopes that Ambassador Razali will continue to contribute his views for the advancement of United Nations reform.

This session of the General Assembly will be an "Assembly for reform". I say this because the current session is of unprecedented importance in terms of realizing the reform of the United Nations.

I should like to recall what the purpose of United Nations reform is. The purpose of reforming the United Nations is, I believe, to strengthen its functions to further enable it to fully accomplish its tasks. As a member of the Security Council, Japan is deeply aware that since the end of the Cold War grave problems of conflicts and poverty have emerged, most frequently and acutely in Africa. By reforming the United Nations, the international community will be better able to solve the problems of peoples in all parts of the world who are suffering due to conflicts and poverty, problems which are especially glaring in Africa. We must begin immediately to strengthen the United Nations in this respect and continue our efforts into the future. Japan intends to play the role which is expected of it in the strengthened United Nations.

I regard highly the strong initiatives of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, in promoting reform. In particular, his proposals for United Nations reform announced in March and July of this year are intended to enhance the coherence and effectiveness of United Nations activities by strengthening the leadership of the Secretary-General as well as the coordination function in each field, including development and humanitarian affairs; as such, they have Japan's basic support. We earnestly hope that the reform of the United Nations as a whole will gather momentum through these proposals.

If the United Nations is unable to reform itself to meet the demands of the coming era, but simply engages in an aimless repetition of detailed arguments in which each Member State pursues its own interests, the confidence of the international community in the Organization will be severely undermined. We must be aware that at this moment we are standing at a crucial crossroads. It is the very moment at which we must summon the political will to decide on the outlines of United Nations reform.

Japan believes that each Member State should, in a spirit of statesmanship, engage in substantive negotiations, not from the viewpoint of pursuing its own parochial interests but from the genuinely broad perspective of maximizing benefits to the international community as a whole.

Japan believes that reforms relating to the Security Council, finance and development are the three pillars of United Nations reform. Today, the Security Council is attentive to the economic and social aspects of the conflicts it seeks to resolve. Moreover, in order to establish a sound financial basis, it is necessary that all the activities of the United Nations, including those in the fields of development and peacekeeping, be rendered more effective. Serious efforts in the area of development are also important for ensuring international peace and security. It is therefore essential that reform in these three areas be achieved as a whole in a balanced manner in order for the United Nations, the sole universal organization, to respond appropriately to the dramatically changing context of the international community and to be better able to discharge its functions.

Now I would like to reiterate Japan's views on some of the most important points regarding the United Nations reform effort.

First, the reform of the Security Council.

Needless to say, the international community is vastly different today from what it was 51 years ago, when the United Nations was founded. Broadly speaking, this is reflected in the following two ways.

First, in addition to those States that were originally expected to assume primary responsibility for international peace and security, other States have newly emerged with the capacity and the willingness to play a global role. Secondly, many States have in the meantime become independent, and today they represent a majority in the international community, in which they have become important players.

Particularly in the wake of the cold war, the Security Council is expected to play an even greater role in the area of international peace and security. To meet such expectations, it is essential that it be reorganized to adapt to these two changes, thereby enhancing its legitimacy and effectiveness. This is the very essence of Security Council reform. It is with such a reformed and strengthened Security Council that effective measures to resolve, for example, the frequent conflicts in regions such as Africa become possible.

It is from this perspective that many States, including my own, are advocating the expansion of both permanent and non-permanent membership. If the reform were to result in an expansion of only the non-permanent membership, the Council's legitimacy and effectiveness would not be enhanced and genuine reform to adapt to the changing times would not have been accomplished.

This year, under the leadership of former General Assembly President Razali, discussions on Security Council reform have gained greater momentum than ever before. Japan strongly urges that we seize this opportunity to decide on at least a framework for Security Council reform and reach an agreement on an outline for the realization of concrete reform by the end of the year. I should like to reiterate that Japan, with the endorsement of many countries, is prepared to discharge its responsibilities as a permanent member of the Security Council in accordance with its basic philosophy of the non-resort to the use of force, prohibited by its Constitution.

I shall touch next on financial reform. Today a further retrenchment by the United Nations in the area of finance is required, and Japan regards highly the Secretary-General's efforts towards this end. The Government of Japan is itself currently pursuing drastic reform of its financial structure, with the aim of bringing its financial deficit below 3 per cent of gross domestic product by the year 2003. It is also essential for the United Nations to secure a solid financial basis for itself. In this regard, I would emphasize again that it is the obligation of Member States to pay their assessed contributions in full, and that Member States in arrears should make every effort to eliminate them.

It goes without saying that the expenses of the Organization must be apportioned more equitably. As regards the basis for calculating the scale of assessments, Japan has advocated adopting the concept of "responsibility to pay" to complement the present method, which is based on the principle of "capacity to pay". Japan's assessment is about to reach that of the United States, and it is already almost as great as the assessments of the other four permanent members combined. If Japan's assessment were to increase further out of proportion, with reform of the Security Council not yet realized, I must say there would be a problem with respect to the fairness of such a situation. Japan strongly hopes that the financial reform of the United Nations will proceed together with reforms in other areas as a whole in a balanced manner, and that agreement on an equitable scale of assessments can be achieved.

The third point relates to reform in the area of development. Development and peace are, so to speak, two sides of the same coin. Without development, the causes of conflicts will not be eliminated, and without peace the conditions for development will not be met. Under its present Constitution, Japan has continued to attach great importance to contributing to international peace through its active involvement in development issues and humanitarian assistance efforts. Involvement in development issues is a matter of priority for my country, and its commitment to the development of developing countries remains unchanged.

Japan has been insisting that a "new development strategy", based on a genuine partnership between developed and developing countries, is particularly necessary in this post-cold-war era. Consideration of the Agenda for Development has concluded recently. We believe it is important that the new philosophy, based on the ownership of developing countries and on a genuine partnership, be widely shared in the United Nations. Towards this end, in July of this year Japan held the Okinawa Conference on Development, and this month co-hosted with the Kingdom of the Netherlands the Conference on the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development/Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) Strategy "Shaping the Twenty-first Century: The Contribution of Development Cooperation". We are thus exploring ways of promoting and realizing this strategy. Through such efforts by Japan, it is becoming widely recognized that South-South cooperation, fortified with the new dimension of triangular cooperation, is an important means of promoting this strategy.

We regard the Secretary-General's proposals to establish a United Nations development group and to consolidate United Nations offices at the country level to be very worthwhile in terms of increasing efficiency. United Nations reform must not be a euphemism for budget-cutting. From this point of view, Japan, with the support of many States, has been advocating the idea of reinvesting in development programmes the savings that accrue from reforms. We urge that this proposal, which is reflected in the Secretary-General's reform plan, be quickly implemented. In addition, Japan hopes that the year 2001 will be designated as the International Year of Volunteers in order to encourage more active participation in United Nations activities at the grass-roots level.

Setting development on track and eradicating poverty in Africa are necessary for the fundamental solution of the conflicts that frequently occur in that region. Bearing this in mind, Japan has been focusing its efforts on African development issues. At Japan's initiative, plans are under way to hold the second Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD II) at the ministerial level next year in Tokyo, following a preparatory meeting, also in Tokyo, at the senior-official level in November of this year. We would like to ask the States concerned to cooperate for the success of these conferences and for the achievement of substantive progress in promoting African development.

Ever since becoming a Member in 1956, Japan has consistently pursued a foreign policy that attaches importance to the United Nations. Since January of this year, thanks to the support of many countries, Japan has been serving its eighth term as a non-permanent member of the Security Council. It has been actively cooperating in United Nations peacekeeping operations and efforts for the prevention and settlement of regional conflicts. Next January, Japan will convene the International Conference on Preventive Strategy, which Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto proposed at the fifty-first session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. We anticipate that concrete proposals will be made at that conference as to how cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity, and the strengthening of the functions of the United Nations through such measures as reform of the Security Council, can contribute to the prevention and early resolution of conflicts in Africa. I am also pleased to announce that next March Japan plans to convene in Tokyo an international conference on the present situation and future prospects of United Nations peacekeeping operations.

Japan is also hosting the third session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Kyoto this December to decide on international measures to prevent global warming to be taken after the year 2000. Global warming is a critical issue, with implications for the future of humankind, and its solution will require the efforts of every country, including developing countries. Japan is sparing no effort to ensure the success of this conference and its adoption of a protocol that is meaningful, realistic and equitable, and I would earnestly ask for the cooperation of all participating countries.

Next year we shall observe the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. I expect the United Nations to further strengthen its role in the areas of human rights and refugee and humanitarian assistance. Japan will also continue to contribute actively in these areas.

In addition, disarmament efforts, as well as the regime for the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, must be further strengthened for the sake of world peace and stability. Japan will also emphasize at this session the importance of steady and cumulative efforts to take realistic nuclear disarmament measures, aiming for a world free of nuclear weapons. We will also participate actively in discussions on anti-personnel landmines, the review of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and the question of small arms.

The twenty-first century will arrive in less than four years. In order to make the next century brighter, the United Nations should reform itself to be ready for the new era. If it is to do so, an agreement on the outline of United Nations reform must be reached this year. Let us join forces to ensure that the world in the twenty-first century is stable and prosperous. This will require that we greet the twenty-first century with United Nations reforms achieved.

I should like to conclude my statement by stressing the profound importance of strengthening the United Nations — the only universal international Organization.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland, Her Excellency Ms. Tarja Kaarina Halonen.

Ms. Halonen (Finland): Let me extend to you, Mr. Vice-President, my warmest congratulations on your election.

The Foreign Minister of Luxembourg, Mr. Jacques Poos, spoke on behalf of the European Union. I fully associate myself with his statement.

The reform of the United Nations is inevitable. The new imperatives of globalization and interdependence must be recognized. Business as usual would inevitably lead to the marginalization of the United Nations in world affairs. I fully agree with Secretary-General Kofi Annan that we should see these changes as an opportunity, not as a threat.

Reform is in the interest of all Member States, whether big or small, whether industrialized or developing countries. Where else but at the United Nations can we deal with the truly global issues such as the new security threats of uncivil society, environmental degradation, violations of human rights and poverty? Given the nature of these issues, unilateral, bilateral or even regional efforts are of course good, but not enough. Not even the most prosperous and powerful nations on earth can successfully solve them alone. Only the United Nations has a global mandate and global legitimacy.

The Secretary-General's proposals are well attuned to our thinking in Finland. The General Assembly should consider these proposals as a coherent whole and give the Secretary-General the authority to act on them during this session. For our part, we, the Member States, must shoulder our responsibility for those reforms that require action by Governments.

Human rights must become an integral part of all United Nations activities. We very much welcome the Secretary-General's comprehensive approach in this regard.

The celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights next year must produce practical results. The celebration is an opportunity to emphasize that human rights are universal rights that belong to all individuals, irrespective of culture or political systems. The duty of Governments is to promote, secure and protect these rights. Therefore, the international community has the authority to deal with human rights violations wherever they may occur. There is no difference between big or small States in this respect. Europe is by no means an exception. The common standards must be valid everywhere. The United Nations has a unique role to play because of its global reach. I personally respect and support regional arrangements and efforts to this end, but they must be in accordance with common United Nations standards.

There is a genuine and growing demand for United Nations action in the field. The United Nations response today is hampered by inadequate resources. I pledge my Government's full support to Mary Robinson, the newly appointed High Commissioner for Human Rights, in her important and challenging task.

We in Finland are very serious people. We try to practise what we preach. Promoting human rights, including minority rights, is an integral part of our domestic policy and naturally extends to foreign policy. As a new feature, the Government intends to submit an annual report to Parliament on the human rights situation in the world. We hope such reports can and will contribute to a more regular and informed public debate on human rights issues.

The United Nations has extensive experience in crisis management and peacekeeping. Lessons have been learned. One key lesson is the need to prevent emerging conflicts rapidly and coherently. Rapid decision-making is imperative both in the Security Council and at the national level. Once the political decisions are made, they should be implemented effectively and without delay. That is why we strongly support the establishment of a rapidly deployable mission headquarters. Finland has contributed to it financially and is also ready to make personnel available. We urge the Secretary-General to establish the headquarters without further delay.

The recent local elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina were undoubtedly a success. The implementation of their results is the challenge for the coming weeks and months. The Dayton peace process is advancing, but at a disappointingly slow pace. Restoring normal living conditions will require major efforts by all the parties in the region. The international community, the United Nations and other organizations will have a tremendous task in assisting people to help themselves in this devastated region. The High Representative for the Implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Carlos Westendorp, deserves our full support in securing the implementation of the Sintra agreements. There is also a need for the continued peacekeeping presence of the Stabilization Force (SFOR) or its successor force.

Africa is the one continent most ravaged by violent conflicts and human suffering. The special session of the Security Council on Africa at the ministerial level is therefore a timely initiative. Crisis prevention and peacekeeping capabilities in Africa should be developed as a priority. We welcome the efforts already under way within the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and other regional and subregional settings. However, these efforts need wider international support. Finland is prepared to continue to do its part by providing assistance in training. We are also organizing in Helsinki, Finland, together with the OAU, a broad-based international conference of non-governmental organizations to promote their international involvement in strengthening peace-building in Africa.

In the Middle East, events over the past year have taken a dangerous turn for the worse. Fulfilment of the obligations of the Oslo accords, and with it real improvement in the daily lives of the Palestinians, is still the best hope the parties have for a just and lasting peace. A turn for the better is first and foremost for the parties themselves to achieve. We urge them to exercise restraint in actions and in words. Finland, together with its European Union partners, is prepared to continue to play its part in supporting the peace process, but clearly the parties themselves must play theirs for there to be a process to support.

The hopes for the peace process should not be betrayed in the face of provocation, humiliation or frustration. Terrorism is unacceptable. It only benefits the extremists on both sides.

In disarmament, the focus is shifting from weapons of mass destruction towards conventional arms, including small arms, as so many colleagues of mine have already mentioned here. The suffering caused by indiscriminate use of landmines is high on the United Nations agenda, and rightly so.

Finland welcomes the Ottawa convention. It is a step towards a truly global and effective ban on anti-personnel landmines, a target which my Government strongly supports. The Ottawa process contains a promise, but it is clear that much work is still needed. Participation in a total ban, particularly by those who are major possessors, producers and exporters of these weapons, must be secured through negotiations at the Conference on Disarmament. Finland will continue to participate actively in the Conference's efforts to stop the further spread of anti-personnel landmines through a global and effective treaty.

The positive trend in disarmament and non-proliferation has been strengthened by the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the bilateral commitments made by the Russian Federation and the United States regarding nuclear disarmament at the Helsinki summit. To assure further progress, these developments should now be followed up by Russian ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the START II agreement.

Finland has consistently advocated a strong United Nations, mandated and capable of addressing socio-economic and development issues in an effective and coordinated manner. In today's world, globalization of the economy, trade liberalization and the information revolution have created an environment of interdependence. Poverty, the root cause of so many other ills, can be eliminated only through sustainable development.

Finland, together with the other Nordic countries, has long spoken for a more unified United Nations system, both at Headquarters and at the country level. The Secretary-General's proposals go in the right direction. The creation of the United Nations Development Group is an important first step. Full integration at country level of all United Nations activities, including those of the specialized agencies, must remain the goal.

The Economic and Social Council and the web of organizations and committees operating within it need to be united in purpose and in action. The proposed reforms do not suffice. The coordinating role of the Council should be made real. To achieve this is the responsibility of the Member States. If we do not take action, the Council will sink into irrelevance.

Similarly, a more coherent United Nations response is required to provide protection and humanitarian assistance to the victims of disasters, whether made by man or nature. The Emergency Relief Coordinator must ensure coherence and coordination in disaster relief. In that role, the Coordinator must receive the full support of all the humanitarian agencies.

On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of this Organization, I remember, more than 150 Heads of State or Government pledged their resolve to bring an end to the United Nations financial crisis. Today, two years later, only 89 Member States — I checked the figure today — have paid their dues in full and without conditions, and many of them did so late. More than half of the membership have not. Yet there are very few Member States whose non-payment stems from circumstances beyond their control, the only waiver known to the United Nations Charter. Non-payment is, in our view, a serious threat to the future of the United Nations, not only because of the unfair burden put on Member States that do pay, such as my country, but because it undermines the commitment and the solidarity that we as Member States share towards our common Organization and among ourselves.

Finland understands the motivation behind the Secretary-General's proposal for a revolving credit fund. However, such a fund — as we have understood it — would use voluntary contributions to cover unpaid legal dues. The United Nations might gain some respite, but so would the countries in arrears. Finland is not opposed to exploring this proposal if others so wish and if the establishment of such a fund is accompanied by real sanctions in case of non-payment of assessed contributions.

Yesterday, we heard the Secretary-General in his statement ask the Governments assembled here to make the fifty-second session of the General Assembly a

"Reform Assembly". This is a challenge that we and our Organization cannot afford to fail.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Portugal, His Excellency Mr. Jaime Gama.

Mr. Gama (Portugal) (*spoke in Portuguese: English text furnished by the delegation*): Allow me first to congratulate my colleague from Ukraine, Minister Hennadiy Udovenko, on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly, and to convey to him our appreciation and the confidence we place in his personal qualities and experience to steer the work of the current session. In his election, I see also the recognition of the role played on the international stage by Ukraine, a European nation with which we have friendly ties. I am pleased to recall the occasion on the margins of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) meeting in Portugal last May when he initialled a "letter on the special partnership between NATO and Ukraine".

I would also like to pay tribute to the outgoing President, Ambassador Razali Ismail, for the dedicated and competent manner in which he presided over the work of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly, and notably for his promotion of United Nations reform, which we consider to be essential.

I wish to express my appreciation to the Secretary-General for the new dynamism he has brought to the Organization and for the proposals he has made for its modernization.

My colleague from Luxembourg has already addressed the Assembly on behalf of the 15 member States of the European Union. However, I would like to reflect on a number of questions of particular importance to my country.

The main question on our agenda is undoubtedly the reform of the United Nations. Despite its achievements and increasing importance on the international stage, the United Nations today needs a profound transformation to enable it to face the challenges of the next millennium.

Portugal expresses its appreciation for the programme of reforms presented by the Secretary-General and reaffirms its readiness to participate in the further development of this initiative, taking up the challenge to build up a more effective Organization, with a better capacity to respond and a more rational utilization of its resources. The Portuguese Government supports in general terms the proposals contained in that programme.

Among the instrumental measures proposed, Portugal sees merit in the creation of the post of Deputy Secretary-General. We also welcome the proposal to rationalize the debates of the General Assembly so that it may focus on specific themes.

With regard to the area of peace and security, the primary focus of the action of the United Nations, we support the strengthening of its institutional capacity in the field of preventive diplomacy and of post-conflict peace-building. The creation of a rapidly deployable mission headquarters and the initiative of some Member States to constitute a high-readiness brigade are instruments that will permit the United Nations to strengthen its capacity to react to emerging crises. I am pleased to note that Portugal is ranked twenty-sixth among nations contributing troops for United Nations peacekeeping operations.

We also believe that cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations should continue to be encouraged, particularly as concerns the African continent.

With regard to the defence and promotion of human rights, I would like to commend the emphasis given by the Secretary-General to its cross-sectoral nature, which must be taken into due account in all the activities and programmes of the United Nations.

In this context, we are also particularly pleased to see the proposal to fuse the Centre for Human Rights with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The process of reform in this area will be carried out by the new High Commissioner, Mrs. Mary Robinson, whom I congratulate on her recent appointment.

The effectiveness of intervention by the United Nations in humanitarian assistance is of special concern to us, including within the framework of the Security Council. Therefore, Portugal welcomes the proposal of the Secretary-General to restructure this sector by strengthening the role of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, as well as the suggestion for the establishment of an Economic and Social Council segment for humanitarian affairs.

The promotion of social and economic progress is a fundamental goal of the United Nations. As the Secretary-

General rightly reminded us in an Agenda for Development, development cannot be attained in the absence of peace and security or in absence of respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Portugal notes with satisfaction the process of readjustment proposed by the Secretary-General to strengthen the macroeconomic coordinating mechanisms of the activities of the United Nations and its specialized agencies.

In the area of assistance for development, we see with equal satisfaction the focus on guaranteeing an integrated, coherent and coordinated activity of all funds, programmes and agencies involved. As we see it, however, such efforts must not jeopardize their respective autonomy and specificity.

We understand the goals of the challenge launched by the Secretary-General to replenish the levels of financing for development activities of the United Nations. For our part, we pledge to continue our efforts, within the limits of our capabilities. We also believe that the persuasion and mobilization of the private sector may turn out to be very useful at a time of acute budgetary restrictions.

In this context, and in the light of the increasing disparity between developed and developing countries, the proposal of the Secretary-General to channel savings resulting from reforms towards development activities is particularly welcome to us. The promotion of sustainable, equitable and socially just development has increasingly become a top priority for the United Nations. The guarantee of a balance between economic growth, the conservation of the environment and the protection of natural resources is essential for the future of our planet. Portugal therefore supports the proposals of the Secretary-General aimed at strengthening the United Nations Environment Programme as the core environmental agency of the United Nations.

Finally, we cannot fail to underline that the goal of the reforms, particularly in the economic and social sector, should not be exclusively to reduce costs but to rationalize structures and consequently to improve the capacity of the Organization.

We support a reform and enlargement of the Security Council that reflects the increase in the Members of the United Nations, takes into account the new political and economic realities and ensures fairer geographical distribution. In this way, the Security Council will be more democratic and therefore more effective in the formulation and implementation of its decisions.

With regard to the composition of the Security Council, we advocate an equitable increase in both categories of membership, encompassing all regional groups, in order to make it more representative.

As to the selection of new permanent members, we believe that certain criteria should be applied, namely, respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter, full acceptance of the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice and the capacity and will to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security, as well as global influence.

The Portuguese Government reaffirms its support for the inclusion of Germany and Japan as permanent members of the Security Council. But it would be difficult to understand if the increase in the number of permanent members did not also include States from the regions of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. In this context, among eligible countries, there is Brazil, a founding Member of the United Nations, the largest country in Latin America and a State that is committed to the principles of the Charter.

Portugal believes particular emphasis should be given to the review of the working methods of the Security Council, not only in order to strengthen the transparency of its decision-making process, but also to create the conditions for an improved ability for non-members to accompany the work of the Council. In fact, this was one of the concerns of the Portuguese candidature for the Security Council for 1997-1998 and was one of the main priorities of the Portuguese presidency of the Council last April. Within the Security Council, we have advocated the holding of open Council debates to allow non-members to participate in discussions of matters of direct interest to them.

We have also encouraged the involvement of the Security Council in debating themes which have particular relevance to its work, such as the promotion of human rights, the protection of refugees, humanitarian assistance and the impact of sanctions, aiming at providing a more coherent framework for the Council to act in the future.

One of the most pressing concerns requiring an urgent response is resolution of the Organization's serious financial crisis. We believe that the solution lies in the full and timely fulfilment of obligations, the unconditional payment of arrears to the Organization, review of the scales of assessment so as to reflect the real capacity to pay of Member States, and applying financial rigour and rationalizing the use of existing resources. These proposals seek to guarantee a sound financial base for the United Nations.

Portugal, a member of the troika of observer countries of the peace process in Angola, and a member of the Security Council, continues to pay particular attention to developments in that African country. We were particularly encouraged to witness the positive events of March this year: the formation of a Government of Unity and National Reconciliation including members of UNITA, as well as the return to the National Assembly of that movement's parliamentary group. These important fulfilments of the 1994 Lusaka Protocol, which is the framework for the entire process, were undoubtedly an important step forward in the eyes of all those, foremost among them the Angolan people themselves, who yearn to see this great African country enter fully into a future of peace, national reconciliation and economic and social development. We are therefore understandably concerned about the new difficulties affecting the peace process, which have already resulted in the timely, and we hope decisive, intervention by the Security Council through its resolution 1127 (1997), adopted last month. As we stated on the occasion of its adoption, we consider the terms of the resolution — the ability to impose sanctions — to be a stimulus for UNITA to fulfil its obligations under the Lusaka Protocol, which it accepted freely. This is not an attempt to condemn UNITA to isolation or to exclude it from the peace process, of which it is, and should continue to be, an integral part.

Peace in Angola is possible and necessary. But, as we have stated before, in the final analysis it depends on the political will of the Lusaka Protocol signatories. They must not, however, ignore the human, financial and material investments the international community has already made in Angola in defence of the peace process. Should the current impasse in the Angolan peace process continue, the international community will undoubtedly adopt the measures required under the circumstances. We therefore reiterate our appeal to the parties, and in particular to UNITA, to show the international community, by taking concrete steps, that they have decidedly opted for the road to peace, once and for all relegating to the past the spectre of a fratricidal war.

Finally, I could not end this reference to Angola without saluting the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Angola, Maitre Alioune Blondin Beye, who has been tireless in his mission to defend the peace process. We would also like to place on record our sincere appreciation to all those who, working with either great commitment with the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM III) or the United Nations Observer Mission in Angola (MONUA), embody the international community's hope that a brighter future awaits the Angolan people.

The President returned to the Chair.

Year after year Portugal has brought to the attention of this Assembly the question of East Timor. Some may have thought that time would consign this question to oblivion. But the events of this last year have confirmed that the problem of East Timor is more alive than ever before in the conscience of the international community. I recall the award of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1996 to Monsignor Ximenes Belo and José Ramos-Horta, two East Timorese who, in different fields, have greatly distinguished themselves in taking up the rights and the identity of the people of East Timor. The award of that Prize also demonstrates the respect and solidarity of world public opinion for the struggle of a people for freedom and for their inalienable right to self-determination, which all Members of the United Nations are duty-bound to respect.

Here, I would like to praise the recent initiative of the President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela, in support of the efforts of the Secretary-General, aimed at the release of the East Timorese leader Xanana Gusmao and of all other East Timorese political prisoners.

Unfortunately, this increasing international attention to the question of East Timor has not resulted in an improvement of the situation in the territory, where the systematic violation of the most basic human rights persists and whose people continue to be denied the right to express and affirm their identity, despite the deliberations, year after year, of the Human Rights Commission.

I would like to express our recognition of the new impetus which, in accordance with the mandate given to him by resolution 37/30, the Secretary-General has sought to give to the search for a negotiated settlement to the problem of East Timor by: appointing a Personal Representative dedicated exclusively to this matter, in the eminent person of Ambassador Jamsheed Marker; providing a more operational and active impulse to the tripartite negotiations under his auspices; and relaunching the all-inclusive East Timorese dialogue which involves the active participation of the East Timorese in this process, involvement that is essential to its success.

Only through negotiations will it be possible to find a lasting solution to the problem of East Timor. Portugal is contributing, with hope and commitment, to this new cycle of negotiations aimed at achieving a just, comprehensive and internationally acceptable solution for East Timor, according to the terms of the Charter and the relevant resolutions of the United Nations.

Portugal has sought to give fresh impetus to its participation in international organizations, recognizing the dynamism and increased importance of multilateral forums in international life. Since the last General Assembly session, Portugal has hosted two important international meetings: the Summit Meeting of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the spring ministerial meeting of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Portugal has also recently hosted two rounds of negotiations on Western Sahara. We welcome the positive results achieved on this question by the special envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. James Baker.

In 1998, Portugal will be hosting the eighth Ibero-American Summit, and will organize, in close cooperation with the United Nations, the first world conference of youth ministers, which will take action on the United Nations World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond.

I would like also to refer to the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (CPLP). The promotion of the Portuguese language, spoken today by more than 200 million people, the new modalities of institutional cooperation which have been established and the coordination of the diplomatic and political positions of the founder countries in the many international forums involved, have made this organization, despite its youth, an attentive participant within the international community.

The problems associated with the many components of the drug phenomenon are among the biggest challenges faced by our societies today. The phenomenon particularly affects our young people, and its global nature certainly requires a concerted response on the part of the entire international community. In this context, and given that Portugal is presiding over the preparatory work for the special session of the General Assembly on drugs, which will take place in June 1998, I would like to underline the importance we attribute to that event. We sincerely hope that that session will produce a clear political commitment on the part of Governments to combat the drug plague, and that concrete steps will be taken in that direction. With a view to achieving these objectives, I appeal to Member States to be represented at the special session at the highest political level.

With regard to sustainable development, Portugal has closely followed the implementation of the principles established by the Rio Summit. The nineteenth special session of the General Assembly confirmed, however, that we are still far from implementing fully the goals established there. Allow me to underline the three components to which Portugal attributes particular importance: combating desertification, protecting the forests and protecting the oceans. Portugal considers that in the fight against desertification the United Nations Convention is the fundamental legal instrument for the implementation of new international actions on this matter. With regard to the northern Mediterranean, we will continue to promote the most extensive cooperation with our partners, and we are open to closer association with the countries of North Africa in a joint effort involving the entire Mediterranean region.

In the area of the preservation of forests, we support action undertaken, particularly in the context of the United Nations, with a view to the conservation, integrated development and sustainable management of this important heritage of mankind. I would like to draw attention to the holding in Lisbon in June 1998 of the third Pan-European ministerial Meeting on the protection of the forests, which we hope will contribute significantly to protecting forest ecosystems that have deteriorated.

As regards the oceans and seas, Portugal will continue to support efforts to preserve them, advocating in particular the more effective protection of marine biodiversity and the integrated management of coastal, continental and insular zones.

Following the proclamation of 1998 as the International Year of the Ocean, Portugal is proud to be organizing in Lisbon the last universal exposition of this century, Expo 98, which will be dedicated to the theme "Oceans: a heritage for the future".

Particularly relevant in this context will be the work of the Independent World Commission on the Oceans, chaired by the former President of the Portuguese Republic, Mr. Mario Soares, the conclusions of which will be presented to the General Assembly at its next session.

I would like to end my statement with a word of hope and optimism for the future of the Organization. We believe in a revitalized and even stronger United Nations for the twenty-first century. The Assembly can count on our efforts to work towards that goal.

The President: I now give the floor to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, His Excellency Mr. Hans van Mierlo.

Mr. van Mierlo (Netherlands): First of all, allow me to subscribe to the statement delivered this morning by the Foreign Minister of Luxembourg, Mr. Jacques Poos, on behalf of the European Union. In particular, Sir, I wish to join him in his congratulations to you on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly.

As the year 2000 draws closer, our feelings somehow make us ponder more keenly the achievements and misfortunes of the present century, and make us look ahead to the next one. As I do this, central to my thoughts is the United Nations, an institution created when I was an adolescent, at the end of a war whose horrors were just then coming to light. I remember having been elated at the time about the purposes and principles of the new Organization, and I remember how intrigued I was to see that, in a way, devastation and despair had given rise to the belief that a better world could yet be built, a world marked by peace, development and respect for human rights, notions I was just beginning to learn about. Soon enough, I came to realize that such a world would be rather longer in the making than the Charter had led me to hope; that old questions were giving way to new ones; that the United Nations was not a panacea for all the troubles of mankind; and, more to the point, that the United Nations could never be stronger than its Member States collectively willed it to be.

Yet somehow my expectations remained, expectations which I shared with a growing audience around the globe, and which one generation was passing on to the next. Rightly or wrongly, nations and individuals, Governments, civil society and the public at large: they all have expectations about what the United Nations can do for them, and about how it might change their lives and their destiny for the better.

The question then is not so much whether the United Nations can meet all of those expectations. For it cannot, and it probably should not even try. The United Nations has neither the mandate, nor the resources, nor the power to be the world's keeper. The question is rather how we can exploit the strong points of the Charter, how we can make the United Nations play a role that only the United Nations can play, and how we can better equip the Organization to do more by doing what it does better. With that in mind, I wish to highlight three matters this afternoon: the fitness of the Organization; the potential of the United Nations to manage crises in the wider context of development; and the Organization's action in the field of human rights.

Part of the reason why the United Nations has problems in meeting expectations is what it has turned into over the past 30 years: an amazing structure of boards and committees populated by a growing membership and assisted by an army of civil servants. For that reason alone, the Organization has lost credibility. Efforts to streamline and revitalize the Organization are therefore long overdue. United Nations reform is a must. The proposals put forward by the Secretary-General are an important first step in that process, as the Foreign Minister of Luxembourg, Mr. Poos, said this morning, a process that will have to incorporate more ambitious ideas as it unfolds. The Kingdom of the Netherlands supports the Secretary-General in his reform drive, we applaud the fact that he has made reform his number-one agenda item, and we welcome the reform package Mr. Kofi Annan has put in our care.

But we should get on with it. The world cannot afford to wait. We are looking at an Organization that is far behind on its maintenance schedule. Yet over the past three years, the reform debate has inched forward as if oblivious to the need to produce results. Fortunately, the Secretary-General has injected new momentum into the debate, and we should all welcome this.

As we are about to engage in this "Reform Assembly", as the Secretary-General has called it, we should be conscious of the underlying concerns that have surfaced in the reform debate from time to time. These concerns are real, and dismissing them would jeopardize a promising outcome for the present session. Indeed, various groups of nations have doubts about what other groups of nations are ultimately aiming for in this exercise. Developing countries have even expressed misgivings about the reform process as a whole. Some of them are clearly afraid that major Western Governments are out to recast the United Nations as an institution that would run on the lowest possible budget and concentrate on peacekeeping, humanitarian aid and human rights. Another concern is that the development programme of this Organization — perhaps its single most important achievement over the past 30 years — might actually suffer as a result of reform.

Understandably, many nations see the decline in recent years of official aid levels as the writing on the wall. They are disheartened by the empty promises of Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Moreover, they are worried about the current financial crisis of the United Nations. And finally, a handful of nations describe the Secretary-General's proposals as a "northern" package — one that caters mainly to the needs of the industrialized world.

Instead, developing nations would wish to see the United Nations strengthened in what to them is perhaps its most critical field of action, a field of action that corresponds to one of the main purposes mentioned in the Charter: social and economic development. They rightly argue that if the United Nations membership wants to be serious about that objective, it needs to equip the Organization accordingly. And so, in their view, more resources should flow into the Organization. Before consenting to change anything, they are inclined to play it safe and to hold on to what is there.

This line of thought, assuming I am reading it correctly, calls for comments. My first remark is that, clearly, the Secretary-General was well-advised in having most of his package focus on the economic and social sectors. This is indeed the area that commands the widest interest among the membership. If we look at the merits of the package, it seems fair to say that many industrialized nations might have wanted to see more ambitious and comprehensive proposals. Still, speaking for the Netherlands Government, I would argue that the present package of reform measures is well-directed, substantial and worthwhile. Evidently, the Secretary-General, on the basis of consultations which only he could undertake, has concluded that the contents of the package represent the maximum of what is achievable in the present state of play. And we should all accept that as a given.

Furthermore, it is important to remember that reform might strengthen the development sector of the United Nations to the point where it can actually deliver better service with the resources that are presently available. This exercise is not about cutting costs. Yet a leaner and meaner Organization might give better value for the money. At the same time, we welcome the idea of a development dividend, as put forward by the Secretary-General.

A stronger development sector may help make the United Nations a more attractive Organization not only to recipients, but to donor countries as well. Voluntary contributions should not come only from the same small group of traditional donors year after year. For a long time now, the Netherlands has been among the top contributors to the United Nations system, and we intend to remain so. We appreciate the spectacular gesture by Mr. Ted Turner. But donor contributions should also come from those nations that fall far below the 0.7 per cent mark, as well as from newly industrialized countries in Asia and elsewhere.

Finally, all Member States should become current and stay current on their financial obligations under the regular and peacekeeping budgets; and payments should be prompt, in full and certainly without conditions.

All in all, the heart of the matter is not about core concepts and not about mindset; it is about trust. It is about feeling comfortable with the idea that among 185 Member States, a difference of views is inevitable, particularly when they are asked to discuss such a wide-ranging matter as the future of this Organization.

We have arrived at a crossroads where we face a critical choice. This is a moment when we have to rise above the level of squabbling over details in working groups. No doubt, we all have a point to raise, a question to ask and a change to make. But that avenue would lead us nowhere, for soon enough the package would fall apart. Now is the time to start trusting each other. This is a time for vision and political courage. We, as statesmen, should be ready to accept our responsibility in this regard, to join forces and to forge a breakthrough. We should all rise to the occasion and accept the package of the Secretary-General as it is before us now and work out the details and implementation later. Endorsement in general terms needs to be expressed before we all adjourn next December. Without such endorsement, the momentum in the reform process will be lost.

We, the Member States of the United Nations, pledged ourselves, in the words of the Charter:

> "to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace".

Next to the United Nations development effort, peacekeeping and peace-building are perhaps the most visible part of what the United Nations does — an impression refreshed by Cable News Network (CNN) almost daily. More importantly, those who are on the run, who are afraid for their lives, who watch their homesteads invaded, who are occupied and repressed, who look starvation and genocide in the face — they have expectations of the United Nations. They expect the Organization to bail them out.

We need to improve the capacity of the United Nations to deal with crises, be they military, political or humanitarian ones, whether man-made or not. There is considerable room for improvement here, as illustrated by the situations in Bosnia, Somalia, Rwanda and Zaire. As we speak, innocent blood is flowing in many places around the world. Yet all too often the United Nations remains impotent. We cannot allow this to continue. Here again lies a major area where reform is indispensable, and the Secretary-General has duly underlined this.

A number of Member States, including the Kingdom of the Netherlands, have been trying to develop the concept of a standby high-readiness brigade within the framework of the United Nations standby agreements. They have been making modest progress over the last three years. A rapidly deployable headquarters is now being established. Tomorrow a small group of nations will informally deliberate on how to promote further steps. Several other initiatives are under way, including regional ones. Given the complexities, this is going to be an incremental process, but one where we cannot afford to let up.

The real test is where to position peacekeeping in the wider context of the overall concerns of the United Nations. Our agenda should be wider and should include conflict prevention and peace-building.

The difficulty we need to address here is how to integrate different policy instruments — political, military, relief, rehabilitation and social and economic development — into one comprehensive framework. Crises require a coherent and effective international response, a response that should integrate preventive diplomacy, political mediation and humanitarian relief, but also social action, economic alternatives and cultural communication. In sum: development.

Of course, prevention is the key. The United Nations can be much more effective when we invest in prevention. Diplomacy, economic sanctions, arms embargoes and political pressure will reduce risk and costs as compared to military intervention in an escalated conflict. We could avoid the loss of life and escape generalized human misery. As a result of timely prevention, we could also avoid the immense costs for rehabilitation, resettlement and reconstruction that arise after violence is over. Military intervention, under United Nations auspices, for humanitarian purposes may be necessary in certain conflict situations. But it should always be a means of last resort. Intervention implies that prevention has failed.

The link between development on the one hand and peace and security on the other is a tenuous one in the United Nations system. Yet experience has proved that making the link is imperative. We need to find the best combination of conflict management, humanitarian assistance and social and economic programmes to pave the way for sustainable development and for sustainable peace.

In San Francisco we promised to promote and encourage

> "respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all".

It is a pledge we will have to renew again and again, perhaps indefinitely. Yet such a pledge may not degenerate into lipservice. Commitments must be turned into reality; obligations must be implemented. We cannot let our guard down as we face reports on violations of human rights. Torture is still being practised on a wide scale. People continue to disappear. Arrest and detention without cause take place routinely. And freedom of the press is non-existent in too many countries.

Still, we recognize that human rights are in better shape worldwide than they were 10 years ago, and certainly 50 years ago. Totalitarian regimes have all but disappeared; democracy is on the rise. Also, there is more interest than ever before in the triangle of democracy, good governance and human rights.

Today, human rights are well established as an important objective in their own right and a major field of activity for the United Nations. But, perhaps more important, human rights have become a leitmotif in a wide variety of other areas of United Nations policy, from sustainable development to population, from trade to humanitarian aid, and from peacekeeping to human settlements. That human rights is a "cross-cutting" issue is evident from the reform proposals of the Secretary-

General and from the way he has revised the top management structure in the Secretariat — both of which we welcome warmly.

Expectations on what the United Nations can achieve in the field of human rights have run high, among victims of human-rights violations, among mothers of the disappeared, among grass-roots groups, and among non-governmental organizations. Then again, there are Governments that expect the United Nations to stay out of their precincts entirely: Governments that accept the universality of human rights, but only as a debating point; Governments that accept the United Nations actions against human rights-violations, but only at a theoretical level and not when it concerns them.

All in all, the instruments the United Nations can apply have become the core of an extensive machinery that in many cases has worked strikingly well. Examples are numerous and expanding. I refer to such diverse methods as international dialogue, the integration of human rights activities into cooperation arrangements, the work of human rights field offices, human rights education and strengthening regional supervisory machinery.

More recently, a new High Commissioner for Human Rights took up her position. If this is indeed the age of human rights, as the Secretary-General says, then Mrs. Mary Robinson will be one of its key personalities. We wish her courage and wisdom in her new assignment, and she can be sure of our commitment.

One major platform in the realization of human rights and the international administration of justice is soon to take its definitive shape. Next summer, a diplomatic conference will convene in Rome — we should all be grateful to the Italian Government for hosting it — that will, hopefully, adopt a convention establishing an international criminal court. Once established, the court will be the natural counterpart to the International Court of Justice. My Government is looking forward with anticipation to this new offspring in the international legal order, and I take pride in announcing that my country is offering to house the seat of the court, in the city of The Hague.

The fitness of the United Nations as an Organization, its capacity to manage crises in the wider context of development, and its action in the field of human rights are areas of ongoing concern to all Member States. This Assembly will continue to address them, either on their own merits or in the context of United Nations reform. The United Nations is expected to perform in these areas and to produce results. Yet there is only one way this is going to happen: if all of us join forces, join forces to make the United Nations a viable and credible institution, join forces to make it a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations in the attainment of these common ends. For only then will we keep the promise of San Francisco.

Announcement by the President: Expression of Congratulations

The President: The Assembly will next hear addresses by the Heads of State of Guatemala, Costa Rica, El Salvador and Honduras. In this connection, I have been asked by the Heads of State of these four countries, as well as the Head of State of Nicaragua, to request members of the General Assembly to first hear all four addresses before proceeding to the Indonesian Lounge to offer expressions of congratulations.

Address by Mr. Alvaro Arzú Irigoyen, President of the Republic of Guatemala

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Guatemala.

Mr. Alvaro Arzú Irigoyen, President of the Republic of Guatemala, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Guatemala, His Excellency Mr. Alvaro Arzú Irigoyen, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Arzú Irigoyen *(interpretation from Spanish):* It is a great honour for me, as the representative of the people of Guatemala and as President *pro tempore* of the Central American Integration System, to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your well-deserved election to preside over the General Assembly at its fifty-second session.

We wish to thank the President and the Secretariat for their understanding in allowing us to alter protocol and to address the Assembly in the form of a joint presentation. We Central Americans deemed it necessary and timely to do so because we wish in this way to highlight the importance, the scope, the depth and the extent of the changes that are taking place in Central

America after years of confrontation and suffering for our peoples and our region.

We bring good news. Central America is undergoing remarkable changes, and the Central American leaders wish to share together here in this world forum the progress achieved in our region. We bring news of peace, democracy and development, news of understanding and cooperation, news of accord and unity. Our region is leaving behind years of internal war and authoritarianism to move into a constructive stage of political, economic, social, cultural and ecological strength, one that will enable us to enter the new millennium with new hopes and achievements by our peoples. And this new stage is being constructed with the respectful participation and responsible support of the international community.

We must recall that barely 12 years ago we Central Americans were on the verge of a regional war and that our countries were experiencing the with full intensity of being one of the last settings of the so-called cold war. But then negotiation prevailed over conflict and we found Central American roads to peace, which led, 10 years ago to the Esquipulas II Accords, embodying the procedure for a firm and lasting peace in Central America.

The processes of dialogue and reconciliation moved forward along difficult and complex roads. The heat of battle was replaced by the warmth of debate. Weapons were laid down, and we began the difficult but unpostponable march towards reconciliation, towards a return to the rule of law, towards democratic strengthening and towards peaceful and constructive coexistence.

As may be recalled, at last year's session I came before the Assembly anticipating peace in my country. In less than 10 months during 1996 we were able to complete negotiations on seven specific peace accords in Guatemala with the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG) and thus, on 29 December of last year, we arrived at the signature of the final Agreement on a Firm and Lasting Peace. Thus we did put an end to the 36 years of internal armed conflict that had torn at the very vitals of my country.

As many here know, the process of complying with the accords has advanced with firm steps. Thanks to the will of the parties and the timely and determined collaboration of the international community, in barely three months the demobilization of the former guerrilla combatants was completed, with the assistance of a military Verification Mission of United Nations Blue Berets, approved by the Security Council.

Without going into undue detail, I can reaffirm what we reported a few days ago in my country: the process of compliance with the peace accords is going forward decisively with regard to all fronts and commitments. The joint commissions envisaged in the accords have already been established, thus creating the broadest and most diversified structures of citizen participation in our history. The commitments on investment and public expenditure on health, education, justice and security for the people are already reflected in detail in the budget for next year, not only increasing the ratio of social investment to levels unprecedented in our history but also changing their orientation in order increasingly to favour rural areas. The National Congress is ready to discuss the agreed constitutional amendments. Similarly, the agreed institutional reforms have begun to be implemented in all areas. The process of the return of refugees from the neighbouring brotherly country of Mexico will be completed before the end of this year, and the guerrilla organizations that formed part of the URNG, having been demobilized, are returning to legality and are becoming a political organization that will participate in future elections.

All of these important changes in my country are being verified and supported by the United Nations, for which we are deeply thankful. All these changes can be added to others that have already taken place in our isthmus and that are enabling us to rediscover our regional agendas of democratization and development. Indeed, while peace negotiations were progressing and maturing in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala, we once again undertook to revitalize our regional integration process. Following the finalization of the series of peace negotiations, that process of integration and regional development has taken on a renewed vigour and dynamism and has recently received a further important impetus. It gives us real pride and hope to be able to share with the Assembly a brief summary of our advances in that process and of the important decisions that we have recently taken.

Fully aware that the region is going through a rare historical moment, one characterized by the existence of popularly elected Governments in all of the countries of Central America and a situation of peace, we deem it essential to design and implement regional and unified responses to the demands of our peoples and the challenges of globalization.

During the past three years we have made extraordinary progress in our integration efforts, which extend from a new conceptual horizon, one that has become better balanced and more inclusive with the creation of the Alliance for Sustainable Development and the establishment of innovative regional projects to increase regional competitiveness by means of joint efforts on the part of Governments, academic centres and sectors of production.

We replaced the former common market in 1991 with a new legal framework that created the Central American Integration System (SICA). However, as we were also convinced of the need to go beyond mere governmental cooperation in our regional integration efforts, a few weeks ago, in Panama, we took an important step towards strengthening, deepening and developing our regional cooperation. We agreed on the broadest possible review and modernization of our regional institutional framework, as we were convinced that the benefits of development to which our people are entitled cannot be tapped by each country separately — they are attainable only to a regional community, because of the dynamics of today's increasingly interdependent environment.

For the first time, at our most recent meeting in Managua, all the Governments of the area agreed that we need to look beyond economic integration and clearly show the will and resolve needed to direct our efforts towards a possible regional political union, a community of independent nations that pool their capabilities without losing their individuality. And that is how we agreed to begin the gradual and continuing process of setting up the Central American Union, as a higher expression of communitarian partnership stipulated in the 1991 Protocol of Tegucigalpa.

Thus, we have taken the first step in a broad and complex process that can bring us closer to the vision of a Central American Union, with the ultimate goal of producing the concrete results sought by our populations: overcoming poverty, creating opportunities, increasing the number of jobs, activating our production capacity, increasing our competitiveness, equitable and unified participation in the benefits of development, genuine democratization, equitable access to an efficient system of justice and the legitimate enjoyment of peaceful coexistence.

We have redoubled our efforts to ensure that Central America is more united and better prepared to face the enormous challenges of its development and to respond creatively and dynamically to the international demands of our contemporary and ever changing world. We, the Central American leaders, have come together to this forum as genuinely united nations to demonstrate our common aim of regional unity and the efforts we are making to that end. We reiterate our deep appreciation for the support and cooperation of the international community to date, and I offer my best wishes for the prosperity of all as the new millennium dawns.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Guatemala for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Alvaro Arzú Irigoyen, President of the Republic of Guatemala, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. José María Figueres Olsen, President of the Republic of Costa Rica

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Costa Rica.

Mr. José María Figueres Olsen, President of the Republic of Costa Rica, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. José María Figueres Olsen, President of the Republic of Costa Rica, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Figueres Olsen (*interpretation from Spanish*): Allow me to begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. Costa Rica joins the previous expressions of appreciation that have been addressed to you and wishes you every success in this period that will be remembered for its special contribution to the reform of this highest forum of international politics.

Ten years ago Central America surprised the world by proclaiming peace. Ten years ago nations separated by hatred and divided by ancestral injustices decided to put an end to their differences through dialogue and reconciliation and to move, without haste, but also without delay, towards a more promising future of equality and sustainable development.

The world has changed greatly in this decade. The walls of intolerance fell in Berlin and in Pretoria; the

Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo have not lost any more children. There is no doubt that we live in turbulent times but, most world leaders, regardless of their religion or ethnic origin, subscribe to the widespread conviction that the models of the cold war cannot guide us through the new millennium. Moreover at the global level, despite the temporary images from Sarajevo, Kigali, Rwanda and Monrovia, there prevails a vision of a twenty-first century in which democracy, reason and justice reign.

My people believes in peace. My people believes in disarmament. My people believes that the destiny of the human family is one of harmony and solidarity under the auspices of international law. These beliefs are not the product of intellectual speculation. Costa Rica has lived for more than 100 years in a democracy protected by pluralism and respect for human rights. My compatriots, men and women, are aware that they are the sons and daughters of a nation whose history proves that there is no force stronger than that of reason. This is why, when our armed forces were abolished as a standing institution in 1948, almost at the same time as the United Nations was being born, Costa Rica declared peace to the world and thus unequivocally showed its profound love for harmony among all the peoples of the world.

Central America comes to this forum united around an ideal of common integration and working together on a shared democratic project. For the first time in history, our countries come before the General Assembly to declare not just their reiterated adherence to the Charter and to the principles and obligations inherent in civilized coexistence in the community of nations, but also their intention to march decisively towards unity as a higher stage in the communitarian partnership that we already enjoy under the 1991 Protocol of Tegucigalpa.

For the last three years, Central America has made a great effort to link up with the rest of the world, something we regard as essential if we are to realize the objectives and priorities of our Alliance for Sustainable Development. This initiative, signed in 1994, was the first in the world to be adopted since the Declaration of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

The fruits of this effort have been abundant. Central America has established preferential relations with Canada, Chile, the United States, Japan, Mexico, the Republic of Korea and the European Union. The biggest innovation has been the definition of agendas based not on short-term interests, but on regional strategic priorities. We are now concentrating on improving integration by thoroughly reforming regional institutions. Convinced that economic growth can be achieved only if accompanied by increasing levels of sustainable development, the Central American countries wish to inform the international community of our decision to move forward resolutely towards a common future, a future of great progress and solidarity for our peoples.

The world today is still diverse, still divided. Many cultures and societies live on a single shared planet. In today's complex scenario, now that the Cold War is over, divisions remain and new dangers threaten international society. This is why the United Nations continues to be the meeting point, the unifying institution for all of us. It will continue to play that important role, provided we shoulder our commitments, face our challenges and make progressive changes.

Since our Secretary-General presented his proposals for reform in July, the Central American countries have expressed firm support for his ideas about a modern, efficient, nimble Organization with better coordination in line with current administrative and financial trends, an Organization enabling us, without further delay, to move from lofty aspirations to real actions that will help everybody, especially those in developing countries, which comprise the overwhelming majority of the members of this body. We take this opportunity to reiterate our clear and firm support for the Secretary-General's proposals submitted to Member States for consideration at this session.

United Nations reform should be accompanied by a constructive review of the scale of assessments. In Central America we believe that the criteria for the scale of assessments need to be changed so that all Member States contribute financially to the Organization in accordance with their means.

The Central American countries believe that the international peace and security system designed in 1945 should be subject to detailed review in a broad and consensual exercise. In principle, we support the idea of increasing the number of Member States with permanent membership in the Security Council. We believe, at the same time, that any such proposal must be democratic and representative of the plurality of States and regions that make up the United Nations. In particular, we strongly support the argument that the three developing regions of the world should have permanent representation in that organ and that the veto power, if there is no willingness to eliminate it, should be confined to topics under Chapter VII of the Charter.

The founders of the United Nations saw a world that had to decide between peace and extermination. Still affected by the Second World War, they were well placed to understand that humanity had no other choice but to shelter under the protection of international law as the only way of preventing a new Holocaust. More than 50 years later, we have a similar duty, but one that is less dramatic thanks to the significant progress made since the end of the Cold War: the duty to provide the United Nations with the political, financial and administrative conditions it needs so that it can continue its work for peace and international security. Central America is ready to make its contribution so that these noble objectives may be attained.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Costa Rica for the statement he has just made.

Mr. José María Figueres Olsen, President of the Republic of Costa Rica, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Armando Calderón Sol, President of the Republic of El Salvador.

The President: The Assembly will next hear an address by the President of the Republic of El Salvador.

Mr. Armando Calderón Sol, President of the Republic of El Salvador, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of El Salvador, His Excellency Mr. Armando Calderón Sol, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Calderón Sol (El Salvador) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: On behalf of the people and Government of El Salvador, I should like to convey to you, Mr. President, our congratulations on your election to preside over this session. To your predecessor, Mr. Razali Ismail of Malaysia, we extend our gratitude for his efforts and initiatives aimed at making progress in the modernization of the United Nations.

We commend the Secretary-General for his remarkable work during the first year of his term and, in particular, for the progress made in reforming the Organization.

More than five years after the signing of the peace accords in El Salvador, we can state with satisfaction that we have fulfilled and achieved the objectives that we agreed to. The far-reaching changes that have taken place in Salvadoran society have received universal recognition, as they represent one of the most successful undertakings of greatest scope carried out with the support of the Organization.

Our Government's responsibilities and obligations do not end with compliance with the peace agreements, but continue throughout time and space with a view to safeguarding the achievements that we have registered in the areas of democratization and respect for human rights, and also to meet the priority needs of Salvadoran society. We Salvadorans are dedicated to building a new El Salvador, attacking at their root causes of poverty and social marginalization and promoting a fairer and more equitable society.

The successful conclusion of the peace processes in Nicaragua, El Salvador and, recently, Guatemala and the establishment of democratic Governments have created a situation conducive to regional stability, transforming Central America into a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development. Central America has made great progress in demilitarization and in the strengthening of civil society, holding free, transparent and pluralist elections; integrating former combatants into national political processes; strengthening democratic institutions and the rule of law; and implementing a development programme whose central focus is the human being.

In the face of globalization and the processes of economic openness and regionalization, we need to be even more creative in tackling present and future challenges. For this reason we are reviewing the Central American institutional system so as to make it possible for us better and more effectively to take our place in the new world order.

The aspiration of the peoples of Central America to pursue a common destiny through the reunification of our greater nation has always been latent among our peoples. It is becoming increasingly clear that unity is the best road for Central America to take so that it can successfully tackle the challenges of the coming millennium. It was in this spirit that on 2 September we signed the Nicaragua Declaration with a view to speeding up the process of unification. Today we come to share our resolve to pursue political union in Central America. We want the international community and the United Nations to be witnesses to our efforts, and before them we commit ourselves to do all that is within our power to achieve this objective. In order to achieve this goal, we ask that friendly countries and multilateral institutions continue to support us and to provide timely assistance, so that our national and regional efforts can complement one another, and to enable us to have at our disposal an effective mechanism for realizing our aspirations.

I should like to comment on issues of far-reaching importance on the agenda of the General Assembly that are vital for the Organization itself. We stand convinced that the principles of the Organization remain valid and that it is a unique, *sui generis* institution, essential and irreplaceable in the international system, and that its reform is necessary in order to adapt it to the demands of the new international order. With respect to the proposed reforms put forward by the Secretary-General, my Government supports the institutional changes that will be necessary for the Organization efficiently to respond to the common problems faced by our nations.

For the United Nations to function better, it must be able to rely on adequate and predictable financial resources. It is the responsibility of Member States to fulfil our financial obligations, which cannot be subject to any kind of conditionality, so as to safeguard the independence, impartiality and credibility of the Organization's activities.

Reform of the Security Council is necessary in order to overcome the imbalances that exist in its current composition. We support an appropriate increase in the number of permanent and non-permanent members, so that the Council will be representative of the number of Members that the Organization now has. These new members should have the same rights and obligations and be designated in conformity with the principle of geographical distribution, so as to include developing countries in both categories. We believe it particularly important to devote attention to the Council's working methods and procedure so as to ensure that the decision-making process is participatory, democratic and transparent and involves effective coordination among all the organs of the system.

The United Nations was created to be universal in nature. Therefore all peace-loving States that accept the obligations enshrined in the Charter should be Members of it. For this reason, we reaffirm our support for the just aspiration of the Republic of China on Taiwan to rejoin the Organization on the basis of the principle of universality, which is the distinguishing mark of the United Nations.

In conclusion, I wish to state that the people of Central America are grateful for the work of the United Nations in the process of peacemaking, democratization and development in Central America. We recognize the efforts that the Organization is continuing to make to promote international peace and security by seeking to settle conflicts by peaceful means and in accordance with the principles of international law.

On the threshold of a new century, nations are facing tremendous challenges. We invoke the aid of God so that peace, freedom and human values may prevail among the peoples of the earth.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of El Salvador for the important statement he has just made.

Mr. Armando Calderón Sol, President of the Republic of El Salvador, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Carlos Roberto Reina Idiáquez, President of the Republic of Honduras

The President: The General Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Honduras.

Mr. Carlos Roberto Reina Idiáquez, President of the Republic of Honduras, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Honduras, His Excellency Mr. Carlos Roberto Reina Idiáquez, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Reina Idiáquez (Honduras) (*interpretation from Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to extend to you, Sir, my sincere congratulations on your election to the presidency of this session of the General Assembly. Your election is well-deserved recognition of your great personal qualities and a tribute to Ukraine. We wish you success in the exercise of your duties.

My delegation would also like to extend its appreciation to the Permanent Representative of Malaysia to the United Nations, Mr. Razali Ismail, for his excellent work during the previous session of the General Assembly.

We also extend our sincere thanks to Mr. Kofi Annan, who in carrying out his mission as the Secretary-General of our Organization has demonstrated a remarkable spirit of hard work and commitment during a particularly difficult time for the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and in the complex task of restructuring and strengthening of this institution.

The most noticeable feature of the world as the end of the century approaches is the generalized spread of democracy. Almost all the nations of the world share this way of life, thereby giving the end of the century a character which has no parallel in past centuries. We are finally living in an era of democracy after a long night of dictatorship and totalitarianism in various parts of the globe. But this universalization of democracy goes hand in hand with something which — for lack of a better name — we might call the malaise of democracy. Dissatisfaction can be heard everywhere; this political system is being called into question in the name of development and prosperity. Democracy with extreme poverty is not the model we seek.

Representative government is a political gain of the modern age, but it is only the halfway point on the road to full human development. It must be accompanied by other elements which are essential to a life of dignity: wellbeing, justice, involvement and a full understanding of the human being as both the root and the fruit of all our efforts.

If there is one thing which we will have to do in the future, particularly in forums such as the General Assembly, it is to find formulas that can provide for a workable relationship between democracy and development, between prosperity and equity, and between growing wealth and disappearing poverty.

The United Nations faces challenges and expectations with regard to this serious matter of the viability of democracy. There is perhaps today no more important task. If freedom, the essence of this political system, is disparaged in the name of growth without values, then the loss of generations sacrificed on the battlefields in this tortured century will lose all meaning. That danger does exist, and those of us who know from our own painful experience the crimes that can be committed in the name of progress have a duty to alert everyone to it.

In recent years, five successive Governments have come to power legitimately in Honduras through free elections. This is unprecedented in our history and it allows us to say that we are indeed practising democracy, which is a lesson we never finish learning. Our experience shows once again that free elections, while being the basis of Governments, are not in themselves sufficient to consolidate the system or to guarantee the complete satisfaction of the people.

Since 1994 we have been trying to involve our people more in major national decisions and we have been trying to pay more attention to their needs through an open dialogue. This is part of our belief that it is essential to move forward from formal democracy to real democracy, if we want it to be more than a constitutional expression and become part of the living culture of our people.

Democratic culture as a way of life requires constant vigilance to bolster its credibility and to legitimize its existence every day. This is why in our part of Central America, Honduras, we have regarded it as essential to back up this form of government with an ongoing reaffirmation of its ethical values and a resolute campaign against all forms of corruption, which is one of the worst and most vexatious enemies of democracy.

In late November this year, Honduras will hold another election to change its Government. I am pleased to be able to report to the international community that this process will be free and transparent and that once again the people will decide the Government for the next four-year term.

Economic indicators provided by national and international institutions agree that at the end of our mandate there has been a significant improvement in the Honduran economy. We are pleased to be able to hand over to the new authorities a country that is in better shape than it was when we began our term. This could well be the real meaning of democracy: constant improvement in living conditions and moving from one level to another through successive Governments — with the free vote of the people being the final judge of what is to be done.

The Honduran way of finding common ground in order to reach agreement on the kind of country we want has been to establish permanent interaction between the governors and the governed.

These last four years of government have to a large extent been an ongoing debate with civil society, the healthy results of which confirm, on the one hand, the advantages of participation and, on the other, the capacities of Government. This is what democracy teaches us, its most valuable lesson.

Much indeed remains to be done, but we are on the right track. We have established solid juridical bases. We have made tangible progress and are building a dynamic State respectful of the law, dependable in justice and, above all, conscious of the enormous needs of the Honduran people and their inalienable right to be the principal focus of development. The social expenditures of the Honduran State in 1998 will account for over 30 per cent of our national budget. This is a clear message to our people.

It is well known that Honduras is part of the great Central American family. We were united in the colonial period and we were united when we attained independence. Separation and fragmentation have simply been a long parenthesis, occasionally interrupted by fleeting attempts at unity. What is important, however, is the will of our countries, repeatedly expressed, to come together again and their demonstrated desire for union, which has always sought new forms of expression and can be wiped out neither by the passage of time nor by setbacks of any kind.

From 1994 to today, two major events have marked life in Central America. The Alliance for Sustainable Development (ALIDES) was signed in 1994 and an agreement was reached to initiate the gradual and progressive establishment of the Central American union as the higher expression of the community association laid down in the 1991 Tegucigalpa Protocol, contained in the Nicaragua Declaration of 2 September 1997.

The Alliance represents a radical change in the integration agenda of Central America, a new concept of development, making it integral to and indivisible from the benefit of the human individual. Sustainable development, as advocated by ALIDES, is a recognition that growth may be pursued while protecting the future — we can grow today without jeopardizing the development of generations to come.

It is also an alliance with nature, a new relationship and a revaluation of our resources. It seeks to avoid the negative consequences of a short-term approach and to look to the lasting prosperity of our peoples. Lastly, it exploits our new competitive advantages: our situation as an isthmus, our long coastlines, our inter-ocean facilities, our magnificent biodiversity and the beauty of the Caribbean region. We are committed to building ALIDES. It is fitting to acknowledge that the originality of our approach has been recognized at the world level and is being endorsed by important entities.

The main content of the Nicaragua Declaration that I have just mentioned is the agreement on Central American union. While we have been working on regional integration, the absence of a political lodestar has wrought a lack of coherence at the regional level. We are now resolved, however, to deal with this lodestar and this political dimension in a gradual and progressive approach that does not run roughshod over history. This will bring us together and define us, giving substance to the vision of Central America shared by the rest of the world.

Our decision is neither utopian nor romantic, although we are such stuff as dreams are made on, as Shakespeare says. We are not talking here of utopias or romanticism. Our decision is simply an act of maturity, a realistic recognition of the needs created by our internal development and by external demands which, if we are to survive with dignity, will require us to make enormous efforts that, in our case, transcend our capabilities as divided, individual States.

We have established a working committee to draft the bases and principles for Central American union. By the end of the year, we should have the relevant documents. The process will culminate in the signing of the formal commitment to political unity.

Those who are familiar with Central American history and aware of our current efforts in the various fields of integration know that Central American union is not simply an act of faith; it is, rather, a work of engineering, an enormous undertaking that, taking into account the unique qualities of each of our States, is the key to the exercise of joint sovereignty.

The peoples of the United Nations must be informed of this important decision. That is why the five Central American Presidents are here, in this highest world forum, spreading the good news of this political decision. Through the representatives here, we wish the world to learn of this great decision and to accept our aspirations, which are shared by other regions of the world. In this context, my country reiterates its endorsement of the right of the Republic of China to become a Member of the United Nations family. We support the work of that great nation, which is seeking ways to participate fully in this and in other international forums without any form of exclusion or hegemony.

I wish now to refer to Honduras's support for the process of deep-rooted change in the United Nations, both in its various fields of operation as well as in its internal decision-making organs. The world in which the United Nations was created was not what it is today and we must therefore keep up with the times.

On the question of the Security Council, we would repeat what was said at the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly and reiterate our belief that a solution to the question of the size of the Council's membership cannot be rushed. Moreover, my country endorses the statement on the strengthening of the United Nations and Security Council reform adopted at the eleventh Summit of the Rio Group. This stated that the Latin American and Caribbean region must be taken into account in any proposal relating to an increase in the Security Council's membership.

We are pleased at the mine-clearance work that has been carried out with international support. In the case of Honduras, this work is particularly important because of the lives taken and mutilations caused by this inhumane practice that is now receiving universal condemnation, a condemnation that we firmly and decidedly support.

Finally, we would like to express once again how pleased we are at the regional and world treatment of the subject of corruption. As the world becomes aware of how this scourge affects the development and peaceful existence of peoples, we will finally make progress towards vanquishing it in the various parts of the world.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Honduras for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Carlos Roberto Reina Idiaquez, President of the Republic of Honduras, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

The President: I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Effendi (Indonesia): For the record, my delegation would like to exercise its right of reply in response to the unwarranted references to East Timor made by the representative of Portugal to the General Assembly in his statement earlier this afternoon. The contents of that statement have led us to question Portugal's sincerity and commitment in the ongoing tripartite dialogue held under the auspices of the United Nations Secretary-General.

It is to be recalled that during the ninth tripartite talks of last June, the Foreign Ministers of Indonesia and Portugal reaffirmed their commitment to work in a cooperative spirit in order to achieve a lasting solution to the question of East Timor. The General Assembly itself has deferred the discussion of the issue for 14 consecutive years. It must be emphasized that Portugal cannot, on the one hand, call for a consultative dialogue under the auspices of the Secretary-General and, on the other, use every opportunity to campaign negatively on the issue of East Timor.

It is also surprising for Portugal to still speak on the need of the exercise of the right of self-determination of the people of East Timor while the historical fact confirms that the problems can be attributed to the irresponsible actions of Portugal itself. It was in August 1975 that the then-Portuguese colonial authority left the armaments and ammunition to the minority group they favoured and abandoned East Timor to civil war, hoping that the armed minority would prevail. The armed remnants of this minority were once headed by Mr. Gusmao. Indeed, it would have been timely and appropriate for Portugal to have heard the voices of the people of East Timor 22 years ago and implemented their wishes and aspiration for self-determination and decolonization, and not now, 22 years after the defeat of the Portuguese-favoured minority group.

It is pertinent to recall in this regard that it was in the face of such irresponsible abandonment that the East Timorese people had rightly assumed the right to decolonize themselves, considering themselves no longer bound to any erstwhile colonial Power. They did so by choosing independence through integration with Indonesia in accordance with resolutions 1514 (XV), 1541 (XV) and 2625 (XXV).

Finally, we Indonesians remain fully committed to the people of East Timor and fully support them in their determined efforts to build a prosperous and happy future for their children and themselves, as they are already an integrated part of Indonesia.

Mrs. Gomes (Portugal): To set the record straight, allow me to recall that the process of decolonization of East Timor is not completed. East Timor remains a Non-Self-Governing Territory, and this question is included in the General Assembly's agenda. Indonesia has failed so far to comply with the basic principles of the Charter and of resolutions 1514 (XV) and 1541 (XV) and of the relevant resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and the Security Council on the question of East Timor. In an effort to settle this issue, Portugal and Indonesia have engaged in negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations Secretary-General. I would like to reaffirm here the commitment of Portugal to this negotiating process and in assisting the Secretary-General in his endeavours to achieve a just, comprehensive and internationally acceptable settlement to this protracted problem. As was stressed this morning in a memorandum circulated by the Presidency of the European Union on behalf of its member States, that settlement shall fully respect the rights of the people of East Timor in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the principles of the Charter.

Mr. Effendi (Indonesia): The response by the representative of Portugal contains no new elements, and the Indonesian delegation therefore does not wish to prolong this debate any further by repeating at length and in detail the events that led to the subsequent decision of the people of East Timor to become independent through integration with Indonesia. Suffice it to say that the position of Indonesia is clear and the process of decolonization was completed when the East Timorese exercised their right to self-determination in conformity with General Assembly resolutions which I have previously mentioned. For over two decades now, the people of East Timor have been sharing fully in the progress achieved by Indonesia, together with other Indonesian citizens.

Mrs. Gomes (Portugal): We share the view expressed by our colleague from Indonesia that, indeed, nothing else new has been added with this last statement in exercise of the right of reply, so we trust that the membership knows the facts and is able to judge, and we have nothing else to add.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.

United Nations A/52/PV.9

General Assembly
Fifty-second Session

Official Records

9th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 24 September 1997, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Udovenko .... (Ukraine)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Address by Cde. Robert G. Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe

The President: The Assembly will first hear an address by the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe.

Cde. Robert G. Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Cde. Robert G. Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mugabe: On behalf of the States members of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), of which I am the current Chairman, and of my country, Zimbabwe, I extend our warmest congratulations to you, Mr. Udovenko, on your unanimous election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. Your election to that high office is a fitting and eloquent tribute to your personal diplomatic qualities and to the valuable role that your country, Ukraine, is playing in international affairs. We are confident that, under your wise stewardship, the deliberations of this session will achieve significant results.

We commend Ambassador Razali, the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session, for having brought his experience and wisdom to bear upon the various special sessions and working groups of the General Assembly that he presided over during the past year, particularly in the area of United Nations reform.

May I also pay tribute to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his vision and for his exemplary leadership of the United Nations. I wish to commend him particularly for his tireless efforts to assist Member States in transforming the United Nations into a more dynamic, relevant and effective instrument for meeting the challenges that confront us as we approach the end of this millennium.

Africa has consistently underlined the need for reform of the United Nations and other multilateral bodies, to promote the democratization and effectiveness of the international decision-making process. Indeed, we have maintained that such international bodies should truly serve the collective interests of the peoples of the world. It is in this context that we welcome the Secretary-General's bold package of proposals, contained in the report entitled "Renewing the United Nations: a Programme for Reform" (A/51/950), which has been presented to the Assembly. These proposals merit our serious consideration. We have taken note of those proposals that the Secretary-General has implemented or intends to implement, as they fall within the purview of his powers as chief administrator of the Organization. We have also taken note of the proposals that he is placing before Member States for their consideration.

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

We stand ready to work closely with the Secretary-General and other delegations to ensure that the reform process is speeded up on the basis of consensus and democratic participation. What is crucial to us is that reforms go to the heart of the matter — namely, the removal of anachronistic and undemocratic arrangements introduced over 50 years ago.

The reform and expansion of the United Nations Security Council is not only desirable but also imperative if the Council is to ensure the successful implementation of its global mandate to maintain international peace and security on behalf of all States. The fact that major geographical and political groupings representing the overwhelming majority of the peoples of the world remain under-represented and without permanent seats on the Security Council is the greatest anomaly of our times. Equally anomalous is a situation in which in this enlightened age the wishes of the overwhelming majority in the General Assembly will continue to be subjected to the whims and dictates of the privileged few by virtue of their wielding the power of the veto.

Why should a small minority of States continue to wield so much power over the destiny of the majority without the latter's consent? Why, indeed, are there frequent and persistent attempts by few States to undermine and circumvent the most democratic and representative body of the United Nations — the General Assembly — on matters of crucial concern to the entire international community? What are we to make of this? Are we meant to conclude that democracy and good governance at the international level should only be at the pleasure and behest of the mighty and powerful? Surely this state of affairs cannot continue, as it makes a mockery of the lofty and hallowed democratic principles we profess to cherish dearly at the national level.

The thirty-third ordinary summit of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), held in Harare in June this year, underscored the pressing need for democratizing the United Nations Security Council and stressed that the process should take full account of the position of Africa as the largest continental grouping at the United Nations as far as the allocation of permanent and non-permanent seats in the reformed Council is concerned. The summit concurred with the position of the Non-Aligned Movement that use of the power of the veto should be restricted if it is not abolished. However, for as long as it exists, the new permanent members of the Council should be granted the same prerogatives and powers as the current members.

Another area of fundamental importance to Africa pertains to the reforms in the economic and social fields of the United Nations. Africa is of the view that for reforms in this sphere to be meaningful and credible they should seek to reinforce the pivotal role of the United Nations in development and, conversely, the centrality of development to the United Nations agenda. We firmly believe in the role of free enterprise as the motive force in economic development. But any attempts to re-fashion an exclusively political mandate for the United Nations will marginalize its role in development, while giving free play to blind market forces and finance capital. This is clearly contrary to the Charter of the United Nations and should be resisted.

The United Nations needs adequate financial resources if it is to continue to fulfil its mandate effectively, particularly in the light of the ever-expanding burden of responsibilities that it has to shoulder. It is therefore imperative for Member States to ensure that they pay their dues and pay them in a timely fashion. Unilateral actions to adjust the Organization's scale of assessment or to withhold funds from certain United Nations programmes undermine the very foundation of the Organization and therefore should not be condoned.

In the area of disarmament, we welcome the adoption at the recently concluded Oslo Conference of the draft treaty on the global ban on anti-personnel mines. The overwhelming support that the treaty received is eloquent testimony to the determination of the international community to rid itself of these deadly weapons, which have killed or maimed millions of innocent people the world over. Africa, which has one of the largest concentrations of anti-personnel mines and perhaps the highest number of victims of these weapons, is happy to join this international consensus. It is our hope that those who remain outside the Ottawa process will reconsider their position and decide to sign the treaty when it is opened for signature in December of this year.

The past few years have witnessed the African continent undergoing a dual process of economic and political reforms. These reforms have in many countries resulted in greater democratization, as well as in higher economic growth rates. In the political sphere, democracy and good governance have taken root on our continent. In the past few years, we have witnessed the end of the dictatorships and military governments in many parts of Africa, and their replacement by governments committed to the political empowerment of their people. In the economic sphere, economic structural adjustment programmes not only have stimulated high growth rates of between 5 and 10 per cent per annum, but have also created an environment that is increasingly receptive to foreign direct investment and greater participation of the private sector in our economies. Most countries have also entered into multilateral and bilateral investment treaties with both developed and developing countries.

At the subregional and continental levels, Africa has taken unprecedented steps to assume greater control of its future through economic integration. The historic convening in Harare in June this year of the inaugural session of the Assembly of Heads of Government of the African Economic Community was an important landmark in Africa's efforts to build a stable and prosperous future for its people. The session resolved to strengthen the African Economic Community through the conclusion of protocols with subregional organizations, such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), among others, which are essential building blocks for a viable economic community at a continental level.

For these efforts to succeed, however, it is vital that Africa receive the prerequisite support and cooperation of its development partners and, indeed, that of the international community at large. We should never underestimate the enormous obstacles that the African economies are confronted with. Africa's external debt problem and the heavy burden of debt repayments continue to drain many of our economies of the much-needed capital for development. More resources in the form of debt repayments than those coming in the form of aid are leaving the continent. There is a need, therefore, for international financial institutions to adopt a unified and coordinated approach to Africa's debt problem that will help to redress the situation. There can be no better time than now for the international community to augment our own efforts to bring the much-awaited peace dividend to our people.

Foreign direct investment to Africa should continue to be augmented by official development assistance. The steady fall of this assistance from 0.34 per cent in 1992 to 0.25 per cent in 1996 is therefore a matter of serious concern to us. We commend those countries which have surpassed the target of allocating 0.7 per cent of gross domestic product to official development assistance and urge others to do likewise. We welcome new initiatives on Africa that have recently been announced in the area of trade, investment and infrastructure development. These are, indeed, a result of the recognition that Africa risks being marginalized unless innovative ways are found to support its development efforts.

Africa in terms of conflict situations still suffers from a number of setbacks. The situation in Sierra Leone, where a military junta overthrew the democratically elected Government of that country in May this year, is a matter of serious concern to us. The Organization of African Unity (OAU), meeting in Harare for its thirty-third summit, unequivocally condemned the coup and called for the immediate and unconditional restoration of the constitutional Government of Sierra Leone. Africa's message is loud and clear. The days of military dictatorships are over. Africa cannot and will not give legitimacy to regimes that willy-nilly flout the rule of law and the popular aspirations of their people. We appeal to the international community not to give solace to these military juntas in the name of humanitarian aid, but to stand solidly with Africa in denying them recognition.

Of equal concern to Africa are the crises in the Republic of Congo (Brazzaville), Somalia, the Sudan, Western Sahara, Burundi and the Comoros. In this respect we take note of, and reaffirm our support for, the United Nations initiative through the Secretary-General's envoy, Mr. James Baker, which seeks to find a lasting solution to the problem of the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic.

The OAU is working tirelessly through the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution in search of African solutions to these African problems. We call on the United Nations and the international community at large to support Africa's initiatives to resolve these conflicts and to strengthen the OAU's capacity for preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution.

We are encouraged by the continued engagement of the United Nations in Angola and welcome the adoption by the Security Council last month of resolution 1127 (1997), calling on the União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA) to abide by the Lusaka Protocol. Africa and the entire international community welcomed the successful holding of elections in Liberia, and we congratulate the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) on the important role it played in helping to bring that conflict to an end.

We salute the people of the Democratic Republic of Congo on the positive developments that have taken place in their country and welcome the commitment of their Government to restore and uphold democracy and democratic principles. Obviously, after so many decades of dictatorship and plunder, the task of rehabilitation and reconstruction in that country is not going to be an easy one. The people of the Democratic Republic of Congo need our support in their endeavours to restore peace and stability in their country.

Indeed, basic necessities such as food and shelter, together with peace, security and stability, are the foremost human rights that the people of the Democratic Republic of Congo ask of the international community in this, their hour of greatest need. While inquiry into alleged massacres in the Congo may be important, the lofty principles of peace, democracy and good governance which we all cherish so dearly, will be realized in that country only if immediate support is provided by the international community.

In respect of the dispute between the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and both the United States and Britain concerning the Lockerbie issue, the OAU summit expressed the hope that the Security Council would consider ways and means to ensure a rapid resolution of this dispute.

The peace process in the Middle East is in serious jeopardy as a result of Israel's refusal to freeze the building of settlements in the occupied territories. There is a real risk of reversal of important gains that have been achieved so far in that part of the world. We call on the parties to the peace process to show good faith and give peace a chance.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate that we believe the United Nations reform process has reached a crucial stage. We have always believed that the United Nations, as a living organism, needs to respond to its changing environment. It is our sincere hope, therefore, that we can make progress expeditiously. We in Africa aspire, in these reforms, for a United Nations which upholds universal values and interests, attends to the urgent needs of the least-developed regions of the world, and remains at the service of humanity.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Robert G. Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Kiro Gligorov, President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Mr. Kiro Gligorov, President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Kiro Gligorov, President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Gligorov *(spoke in Macedonian; English text furnished by the delegation):* First of all, Sir, allow me to congratulate you on your election as President of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly of the United Nations and to wish you success in the execution of that responsible and lofty function. I am especially pleased that the General Assembly has elected to this very responsible function a very competent representative from Ukraine, a friendly country with which the Republic of Macedonia is developing successful cooperation.

The Republic of Macedonia attaches great importance to the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. On the threshold of the twenty-first century, the interdependence of peace and global development is a standard that must be respected. It is dangerous for some to develop while others continuously regress. This trend can only be a source of conflicts, of confrontation of interests, even of wars. Consequently, there is no alternative to the strengthening of peace through the promotion of international cooperation, and our Organization faces the serious responsibility of being even more efficient and more focused on essential issues. This is the direction that the Macedonian delegation will also pursue.

I applaud the fact that the Organization is headed by Mr. Kofi Annan, a very competent reformer who believes in the irreplaceable role of the United Nations as a guarantor of international peace and security. His programme for United Nations reform, as contained in his report of July of this year, is one of the most topical issues before the Organization. We believe that the essential changes that have been proposed take into account the basic consideration that the United Nations remain a democratic institution representing the interests of all Members. We too, much like the Secretary-General, wish the Organization to be a promoter of new changes, a true centre where countries can harmonize their activities in building a better world. Whether the United Nations will truly become such an organization will depend on all of us, and the Republic of Macedonia will continue to make its contribution to that end. In that context, the emerging priorities are as follows: a stronger General Assembly, reform of United Nations organs, and above all of the Security Council, a reduction in the number of ad hoc bodies, greater transparency of operations, and maximum control over the budget of the Organization, financial spending and contributions.

Allow me to address some of the priority tasks that the United Nations will have to face in the coming period, tasks which should not be placed in the background because of the reform of the United Nations. Indeed, that reform must be in the service of a more efficient resolution of the bitter issues that burden the international community. The credibility of the United Nations will to a large measure depend on this, for in the coming period much energy will have to be devoted to ending existing crises and conflicts and to preventing the eruption of new ones.

The United Nations has become renowned for its successful peacekeeping operations. I should like to use this opportunity to express my highest appraisal of the presence of the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) in the Republic of Macedonia, as well as my appreciation to all the participants in that operation, which has helped prevent a spillover of the conflict from some parts of the former Yugoslavia to my country.

With regard to the crisis in Albania, my country has constantly felt the need for the effective presence of the United Nations peacekeeping forces. The cooperation between the Macedonian Government and UNPREDEP, one of the most successful preventive operations in the history of the United Nations, is truly excellent. My pleasure is increased by the reports of the Secretary-General that contain the same assessments. The mission of UNPREDEP is ongoing. We believe that it should continue, for the presence of peacekeepers in the Republic of Macedonia serves not only as a dam preventing the existing crisis points in the Balkans from overflowing, but also as an actor working for peace, security and stability in the country's southern regions.

In that context, the Republic of Macedonia has welcomed and follows closely the implementation of the Dayton Accord. It is a matter of principle that the indicted war criminals be brought to justice. The international community, epitomized in the United Nations, must not allow the Dayton Accord to fail. Hence, it is imperative to give impetus to further engagement by the Organization, in coordination with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union, in sustaining the peace process. A particularly important part of that effort, I would emphasize, is the normalization of relations between the Balkan countries, on the basis of good-neighbourliness and mutual respect. Within its capacities, the Republic of Macedonia has made and will continue to make the maximum contribution to that effect.

The agenda of this session of the Assembly also includes the development of good-neighbourly relations between Balkan countries, in accordance with resolution 50/80, adopted following our proposal at the fiftieth session of the General Assembly, and the election of new members of the Security Council for the term from 1998 to 1999. Allow me to address these issues briefly.

Throughout the twentieth century, the Balkans has remained a concern for the international community due to the many wars waged in this region. The Republic of Macedonia has unequivocally opted for peace there. In this context, we are engaged in an active policy of good-neighbourliness and mutual cooperation with all Balkan countries. This can also be seen through resolutions 48/84 and 50/80 B proposed by the Republic of Macedonia and sponsored by many Balkan countries — but not just Balkan countries — and adopted with the vast support and consensus of the General Assembly. The Republic of Macedonia is committed to respecting the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Balkan States and the inviolability of international frontiers, and to advancing mutual cooperation in all spheres. We are particularly committed to the institutionalized and functional integration of the Balkans in the European integration processes. During this session, our delegation will submit a draft resolution for the development of good-neighbourly relations in the Balkans. I hope that the General Assembly will adopt it by consensus.

As long ago as 1994, my country, the Republic of Macedonia, submitted its candidacy as a non-permanent member of the Security Council from the Eastern European group of countries, for the term from 1998 to 1999. I also announced our candidacy during my address to the Assembly last year. I am pleased that many United Nations Members have expressed great understanding of our motives and arguments, and have supported the need for one Balkan country to be elected as a member of the Security Council. We very much appreciate the support for and confidence in our candidacy that we expect to receive from the Assembly. We would like to make our own contribution to the activities of the Security Council and the United Nations as a whole by incorporating our own policy of peace and democracy into those activities on the issues which fall within those organs' areas of responsibility. I would like to assure the Assembly that our delegation on the Security Council will act in full accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. In the period that lies ahead, United Nations bodies will continue to deal with Balkan problems and the general Balkan situation. This is reality. For these reasons, it is quite logical that the Republic of Macedonia, as a Balkan country, be elected to this function. It will be a great honour for us to shoulder this responsibility, and, at the same time, a great obligation for which we have long been preparing.

The processes of democratic transformation in many countries in the world will undoubtedly continue at the same pace in the twenty-first century. This trend will inevitably influence the character of overall and comprehensive international relations in global proportions. The United Nations and other organs within its system must inevitably take part in these changes. Only if the rules of international law are abided by and the real situation on the ground is respected can a better and more humane world be created and thus our trust in our Organization increased. I am confident that the reforms that have been announced, or rather their consistent implementation, will lead to an even greater affirmation of the United Nations and its commitment to combating policies of force and domination and to supporting peace, cooperation and the balanced development of all countries and peoples. In a word, we are confident that in this way the United Nations will be even more efficient in responding to the objectives and ideals of the Charter of the United Nations.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Kiro Gligorov, President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: I should like to remind representatives that, in accordance with the decision taken by the General Assembly at its 4th plenary meeting, the list of speakers will be closed today at 6 p.m.

Address by His Excellency Mr. Inder Kumar Gujral, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of India

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of India.

Mr. Inder Kumar Gujral, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of India, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of India, His Excellency Mr. Inder Kumar Gujral, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Gujral (India): Mr. President, it is a particular pleasure for me to see you presiding over the General Assembly. As Ambassador to the former Soviet Union for five years, I had a long association with Ukraine, and I retain the fondest memories of my several visits to your beautiful country. You preside over an Assembly that will deliberate on crucial issues before the world community, on which your experience and guidance will be invaluable. I would also like to congratulate your predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail, on the engagement with which he acted during his presidency to carry our work forward. I am delighted also to see the Secretary-General here.

We are celebrating in India the fiftieth anniversary of our emergence as a free nation. The constitutional moorings and the democratic forms which the new nation-State has accepted and adopted rest on the vast foundation of civilizational experience and ethos. This explains the stability, coherence and creative unity of the vast Indian society, which is a world in itself. The experience has wrought in us the deep conviction that, while there are universally shared values and striving, there can be no rigid prescriptions. We see the United Nations in this image, as a crucible in which we meld together our individual contributions to a world civilization, yet recognizing the variety of historical and cultural experiences we bring to it.

The cold war cast an early shadow on the Organization, creating a situation of ideological polarization. The Non-Aligned Movement rejected this imposition of rigidity, representing an independent and responsible alternative to the world view. This remains true, and the Non-Aligned Movement retains its validity and relevance, even after the disappearance of bloc rivalries. Non-alignment was not a by-product of the cold war. Then, it expressed the overwhelming need of previously colonized and disempowered nations to a voice, a perspective and an agenda in a politically and economically unequal and inequitable world. Today, it remains a voice of reason and constructive engagement for the times ahead, which demand common purpose and contribution from all sides towards a convergence of intent on vital, even fateful, global concerns.

Since the creation of the Charter of the United Nations, the world should have changed far more than it has in the half century that has elapsed. Decolonization is almost complete, but the scars of colonization are still with us. The present bears a heavy burden of the past. South Africa is free, but racism rears its ugly head amidst us, often laced with xenophobia. Development and growth — and even human dignity — remain for much of the world a distant dream. We must insistently ask ourselves what we can decisively do at the United Nations to make the dreams of the hundreds of millions come true, how we can make the United Nations a more vibrant organization for the world community as a whole, at a time when we need it more than we ever have, a United Nations that is better equipped to fully respond to the challenges of the next century.

As an organization, the United Nations must also evolve and adapt itself to a rapidly changing environment, the better to serve the core needs of the world community. As a country which sets very great store on the capacity of the United Nations to contribute to international peace and security, and to development — the two crucial priorities before the world community — India, like others, has a vital interest in a United Nations that continually makes itself more responsive to the needs of its Member States and prepares itself to serve them better. This, we believe, is the objective of reform. We are hence very pleased that the Secretary-General, immediately after taking office, made reform one of his priorities and we congratulate him on this commitment. Within the first seven months of his tenure, he has produced a series of proposals of impressive breadth and scope. These are before us, and many have described this session as a reform General Assembly. In this connection, I extend my good wishes to you, Mr. Secretary-General.

We judge the agenda for reform by the measures I have described. We are supportive of all proposals that, in our view, will carry forward, or improve, the Secretariat's ability to respond to the mandates of the international community. We will express our thoughts constructively with the aim of strengthening the process and direction of reform to the collective advantage of the global community and the Organization that represents it. We do not see reform simply as an exercise to trim the budget of the United Nations. Instead, reforms should contribute towards strengthening the United Nations and its capacity to respond effectively to the priorities identified by the overwhelming majority of its membership.

The crisis that confronts the United Nations manifests itself in many ways. A financial crisis has resulted from the inability of some to fulfil their Charter commitments, and from the laying down of pre-conditions to meet them. The United Nations does not have the means to execute programmes that respond to the felt needs and priorities of its membership, precisely at a time when such programmes are sorely necessary. As a result, the United Nations is in danger of being marginalized as the global forum where decisions can be taken that truly respond to the challenges of globalization. The solution lies not in piecemeal reform but in building trust between nations, and in an acceptance that in international relations democratic principles should be the norm, just as they are being increasingly accepted in national governance.

In our view, international peace and security and development are inextricably linked. The one is impossible to achieve without the other. Over the last six or seven years, there has been a growing emphasis on the political aspects of the tasks of development, such as democracy and human rights. Unless the underlying causes of underdevelopment, poverty and social alienation are effectively addressed and removed, this emphasis will remain unrealized. Therefore, the single most important target that the United Nations should set itself is the promotion of sustained economic growth in the developing countries that will lead to the eradication of poverty, and erase the tensions and pressures that have led to the collapse of governance and social order in several States, and to conflicts between others. International peace and stability will be enhanced only when all countries enjoy a minimum standard of economic self-sufficiency and well-being. Therefore, we believe that the thrust of any reform proposals in the United Nations should make the promotion of sustained economic development the principal cross-sectoral issue for the Secretariat's programmes. We believe that there are enough intergovernmental mandates to permit the Secretariat to tailor programmes towards this end.

The universality of human rights, to which we all committed ourselves almost five years ago at Vienna, expresses itself at one level in the international norms for the promotion and protection of human rights and our collective efforts to foster respect for these standards. On a higher plane, this universality stems from the search in different civilizations for ways of protecting the human dignity of every individual. Next year, as we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we will reflect on whether the ideals enshrined in the Declaration have become a reality for people in all parts of the world. As we do so, we must build confidence in a process that encourages introspection and self-criticism, dialogue and consultation, rather than confrontation and judgement. The Declaration calls for the advent of a world order in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want as the highest aspirations of the common people. It recognizes the importance of economic, social and cultural rights as well as their interdependence with civil and political rights. The full realization of all these rights is what will give true meaning to the quest for human dignity embodied in the Universal Declaration.

India's approach to the observance and promotion of human rights is inspired by the holistic vision of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Indian Constitution. A strong constitutional framework, mutually reinforcing safeguards, both within and outside this framework; a policy of transparency and responsiveness to civil society; and cooperation with the human rights system of the United Nations — in particular with the treaty bodies — are the main elements of this approach in the areas of civil and political rights. Equally important, if not more so, are the assault on poverty and underdevelopment; the promotion of awareness of rights; and a policy of affirmative action for the uplifting of socially and economically vulnerable sectors of society.

This is a complex task, especially in a country of India's diversity. Many times, when the State has faltered civil society has stepped in. In India, as elsewhere, individuals have wrought miracles by working outside the established systems and going beyond traditional ways of thinking. In recent times, the most moving example has been that of a frail, sari-clad woman: Mother Teresa. Her fathomless compassion and soothing touch will be missed by millions in India. I would like to pay tribute to this apostle of mercy who rendered service and brought hope to millions of poor and suffering people, not only in India but all over the world.

While development must be our supreme objective, we also need peace, stability and security in order to achieve it. The dangers that threaten us have become increasingly more frightening during the last 50 years than any that have cast their shadow over mankind in its entire history. The development of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons has made it possible to destroy whole populations. As the international community, we have decided to outlaw the production, possession and use of chemical and biological weapons.

However, with regard to the weapons of mass destruction capable of the total annihilation of human civilization, the global community has lived for too long on a diet of empty promises. The pretexts cited in favour of clinging to nuclear arsenals, while always questionable, have now vanished. Mere non-proliferation treaties promoted as disarmament measures only serve to entrench a nuclear monopoly. No credible steps towards striving to realize a nuclear-weapon-free world are contemplated, much less taken, by those who should be showing the way. No justifications can be proffered, as they were during the cold war.

The patience of the world community — as expressed by the International Court of Justice, by the enlightened voices of those who formerly believed in deterrence, by political and general opinion and by weighty voluntary initiatives — is starting to wear thin. Nuclear-weapon Powers owe it to the world to answer the question why they need nuclear weapons. Global opinion wants a nuclear weapons convention — as has already been outlined for the class of biological and chemical weapons — and will not rest until it is achieved. We appeal to nuclear-weapon States to align their policies with what the world wants. We see the United Nations as the forum in which the international community must continue to demand universal nuclear disarmament, and we therefore expect that the Secretariat's programmes will support this intergovernmental objective.

Under the Charter, the Security Council was constituted as a body on which the general membership conferred primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, acting on its behalf. In recent years, the Security Council has been able to play a more active role in discharging its responsibilities.

However, there is often a perception that the Council's actions have not always reflected the sentiments of the general membership. Therefore, it is imperative — and the time has come — for the Security Council to take on as permanent members developing countries which are equipped to make important contributions through their world views and historical experiences and the values of their civilizations. In this way the decisions of the Council will truly reflect the wider membership of the United Nations. Otherwise, the Council's actions will be seen as progressively less representative precisely at a time when it is being called upon to act far more frequently than before on behalf of the world community.

India has let it be known in the General Assembly since 1994 that it is prepared to accept the responsibilities of permanent membership. We are the largest democracy in the world, with a civilization replete with ancient values and achievements, as well as a world view based on a universalist inspiration, participatory governance, respect for diversity and pluralism, and a readiness for constructive engagement in the world's affairs. These strengths, we believe, would be an asset to an expanded Security Council. India's standing as one of the leading economies of the world will be progressively strengthened, and we are prepared to bear fully the responsibilities of permanent membership. India's long-standing participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations testifies not only to the dedication and professionalism of Indian soldiers, but also to the political will of the Government to actively contribute to these operations.

The core of our foreign policy is our keenness to pursue close ties and build confidence and cooperation with our neighbours, while recognizing fully that we are the largest country in the region, in terms not only of size and population but also of economic capabilities. We extend our hand of friendship not in a spirit of mere reciprocity but in good faith. Where we do expect reciprocity, unrelated to size and capacity, is in mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty. We seek to advance cohesion, synergy and mutual goodwill in our neighbourhood so that together we can fully participate in and derive benefits from the dynamic changes the world is currently witnessing. Our approach has contributed to the setting in motion of a trend towards cooperation in our region.

As a large and diverse economy, we are developing new partnerships that go beyond the region and revitalize the old cultural and commercial links. Politically, this is expressed in the active interest that we have taken in supporting the Middle East peace process — our ties with the Arab world reaching deep into history — and our strong fraternal ties with developing countries in general and with Africa in particular. In our larger neighbourhood, with which we have a shared history, we have enhanced our engagement with the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) as a full-dialogue partner and as a participant in the ASEAN Regional Forum.

While maintaining our traditional relationships with the United States, Russia, the European Union and Japan, we have also been strengthening global trends in regional cooperation by actively promoting cooperation among countries of the Indian Ocean rim and trying to recover the cultural and commercial connectivities that have existed since time immemorial and which were snapped in the colonial era.

Global society is seeking to find an equilibrium between the opposing pulls generated by the forces of globalization, nationalism and sub-nationalism. Indeed, it is difficult to see just how they can be balanced, yet they must be or else the potential for international conflagration will be immense. Hence, the absolute need for extreme caution to prevent established nation States from being destabilized either through too hasty a push towards globalization or through the pull of sub-national demands. We see this as a challenge which we will have to face collectively as well as individually.

A global menace that threatens international peace, and to which open democracies are particularly vulnerable, is terrorism. It takes innocent lives indiscriminately, brings fear into the lives of others and shatters the peaceful existence and the normal growth of entire communities. Terrorism should be anathema to the international community because it is the antithesis of every ideal that the United Nations Charter enshrines. Its main vehicle is violence; its aim is destruction rather than development; its doctrines are founded on intolerance; and, in the means it uses and the effect it has, it destroys human rights utterly.

Incitement to terrorism and complicity and participation in terrorism across borders undermine the international system. And even though very few societies are free from its clutches, we still have not developed a global strategy to defeat this evil. The resolve is absent. It is important that we find it, not least because terrorism has a global web, spanning all countries and continents and quickly building links with the other global menace:

drugs. We in India see in our region just how deadly a poison this mix of terrorism and drugs is. The United Nations should take the lead in determined global action to root out these scourges.

The protection and preservation of the environment is an area to which all of us attach the highest importance. The commitment to global partnership for preventing further degradation of the environment, made at the Rio Summit in 1992, was reiterated and the need for effective implementation of Agenda 21 reaffirmed during the special session of the General Assembly in June this year. All the elements of Agenda 21 have to be implemented in full and we need to accelerate the process of such implementation. Any partial or non-comprehensive implementation will be detrimental not only to international cooperation in this area, but also to the threatened stability of the Earth's fragile environment. In this connection, it is our hope that the spirit of the Convention on Climate Change and the Berlin Mandate will be fully encompassed by the protocol or legal instrument to emerge from the Kyoto Conference to be held in December 1997.

What has been touched upon represents huge challenges beyond the capacity of any country to face on its own. This is why it is so vital for the United Nations, now more than ever before, to be a forum where we can pool creative ideas and lessons from our experience and to assist us in understanding and coping with these challenges. This is the ultimate rationale of reform. We will be ready to work with other countries to rebuild the United Nations in the image of our collective aspirations and as our trusted instrument to meet the challenges of the approaching century.

Addressing the General Assembly at its fifteenth regular session, I recall India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, saying here in 1960:

> "The main purpose of the United Nations is to build up a world without war, a world based on the cooperation of nations and peoples. It is not merely a world where war is kept in check for a balancing of armed forces. It is much deeper than that. It is a world from which the major causes of war have been removed and social structures built up which further peaceful cooperation within a nation as well as between nations." *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifteenth session, Plenary Meetings, 882nd meeting, para. 117)*

It is in this spirit that we should approach the tasks before us. I do hope and pray that, under your guidance, Sir, and under the spirited leadership of the Secretary-General, these objectives will be achieved.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of India for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Inder Kumar Gujral, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of India, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: I now give the floor to the Vice-Chancellor and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany, His Excellency Mr. Klaus Kinkel.

Mr. Kinkel (Germany) (*spoke in German; interpretation furnished by the delegation*): I congratulate you, Mr. President, on assuming your responsible office. Major decisions are to be taken at this session and I wish you good fortune in your conduct of the proceedings.

I wish to thank Ambassador Razali for his exceptional commitment. He has made us all aware of the great responsibility we carry during this phase of reform. The Secretary-General, through the impressive manner in which he presented his reform proposals, has re-emphasized that responsibility.

Nowhere else are we so acutely aware as at the United Nations General Assembly that, regardless of our origins or the colour of our skin, we have a common destiny and that we all, North and South, the small countries and the big countries, need one another.

Millions of people all over the world, especially our youth, ask themselves whether we politicians and delegates from 185 nations have drawn the right conclusions from this; whether we can summon the political will for joint action to improve their security, to give them better opportunities in life, and to safeguard their rights, or whether we will go on wasting and destroying the natural sources of human life at their expense. Those of us with adult children know how sceptical their generation have become about the capabilities of the governing class. That is good reason for all of us to stop, think and take action, and to do so here and now.

The world about which we are talking here today and the world which we participate in shaping is not ours alone. We have to preserve it for future generations as well. And this we can achieve only through a united effort. For we are only one world community that has to survive together. There is only one boat for all, our vulnerable blue planet, and there is only one common future, good or bad. That is the reality we face as we cross over into the third millennium and it is the reason why policies deriving from a sense of responsibility are not utopian. Indeed, in our age they are the only realistic approach.

The world organization's programmes and funds, that is to say, those of the United Nation's Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the World Food Programme, together dispense more than $4.6 billion a year in the form of economic and social aid. That comes to about 80 cents for every person on earth. By contrast, in 1994 the world's Governments spent about $767 billion on arms, which was roughly $134 per person. This gross disproportion is intolerable.

I believe that we must all look beyond the rim of our own national interests. There is no more time to lose. We cannot simply come here, make and listen to speeches and then return to business as usual for another 12 months. We have a duty and responsibility to leave our children and grandchildren a world which is worthy of humankind. And that means doing something about it now, today. We must protect the earth's atmosphere by reducing greenhouse-gas emissions. We must ban lethal anti-personnel landmines by joining in the Ottawa process. We cannot accept that we have hundreds of millions of anti-personnel landmines still in place in the ground of many, many countries in this world of ours.

We must halt the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and we must streamline the United Nations Organization. But above all, we must pay our contributions on time and in full. These are the criteria which show whether we are living up to our responsibility.

The opportunity for effective action is there. Despite carping criticism, international cooperation within the United Nations framework is working. Malnutrition and undernourishment have been reduced by a third since 1960 and illiteracy by 50 per cent. Most of the credit for this, no doubt, goes to the United Nations. Infant mortality has been halved in the same period — a great achievement by UNICEF.

Between 1990 and 1995 the world population increased by 1.48 per cent, considerably less than the 1.72 per cent growth between 1985 and 1990. This nourishes the hope that we have got over the hump of the population explosion. Again, this is a big achievement largely attributable to the work of the United Nations Population Fund.

Much, I am pleased to note, has also been done to improve the situation of women. This is important because with all the tremendous social challenges we face, the success of our efforts depends heavily on them. They are the natural advocates of future generations. That is why one of our main objectives still is to ensure they have equal rights, not only on paper but also in practice.

The World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, the Earth Summit in Rio, the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, the Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen and the World Conference on Women in Beijing have demonstrated that the strategies for creating a better and more equitable world are in place. What is missing is the political will to put them into effect. We must learn to give common interests priority over national interests.

We must start to think not only of the present but of the future as well. The first step — and I think it cannot be underlined enough — is to reform and strengthen the Organization which embodies all these objectives: the United Nations, our United Nations.

There has been enough talk. Time is running out. At this fifty-second session, the General Assembly must make decisions. The backlog of reforms must be dealt with during this session.

True, Governments and politicians don't possess a magic wand with which to put the world in order. And I readily admit, as a politician, that it is disappointing to discover how relatively little we ourselves can change, even in high positions, and I take it that it is the same with the others present here. But that does not absolve us from the responsibility to do everything in our power to bring about necessary change and progress.

There is more than enough to be done. The world is still profoundly unjust. From the moment of their birth, millions of people have hardly any chance of leading a life in conditions worthy of the human race. According to UNICEF, more than 20 million children all over the world are on the move. About 300,000 children were killed in the Rwanda massacres. As a result of the 17-year-old war in Afghanistan, another 280,000 or so have died from undernourishment and disease. The civil war in Cambodia has made some 350,000 children orphans. Every 90 minutes a child is maimed by a landmine.

Yet it is on our children, the weakest members of any society, be it in the North or the South of our planet, that the world's future and hopes depend. They are the weakest members of any society. They are little people who need big rights. How much worse off would they be if there were no United Nations? What would become of the world's conscience? Who would demand consideration for and solidarity with such children if we allowed this Organization to decline?

At this moment about 25,000 soldiers, civilians and members of non-governmental organizations are serving the cause of peace around the globe. All of them deserve our thanks and appreciation.

A week ago today five Germans, including the Deputy of the High Representative, Ambassador Gerd Wagner, five Americans, a Briton and a Pole lost their lives in a tragic accident. We mourn their loss and share the grief of their families. Their deaths are an admonition to redouble our efforts for peace. They wanted to help people in need and in doing so brought a ray of hope to Bosnia and to the people working on the ground. That hope must not be extinguished.

Last Saturday I attended the memorial service in Sarajevo. I have visited the region more than once, and the inner conflict among the people was again obvious. As before, the main obstacles to lasting peace in the region are hatred and fear among the various ethnic groups. On the other hand, most Bosnians, in spite of the terrible events of recent years, realize there is no future for them and their children if the hatred and fear are not overcome, despite all the terrible things that have been done, despite the rapes and the "ethnic cleansing".

That is why I am speaking out here today — to appeal to all political leaders in Bosnia to change their attitude and to mount a reconciliation campaign. The international community has provided assistance, making millions of dollars available. We have done a lot. We are very committed on the ground, and we want to see the results of what we have done. We believe that those who live in security and peace have an obligation to help others.

So far more than 300 troops have sacrificed their lives for the cause of peace in Bosnia. My country alone — Germany — has spent more than 17 billion marks on the peace process and on the more than 350,000 asylum-seekers in Germany coming from Kosovo. That is a lot of money, and those on whom we spend it will have to react in some way and have to give us a clear sign of their willingness to implement the agreements.

But outside help, including military support, cannot be provided indefinitely. And on no account — I want to be unequivocal about this — will it be given to those who thwart peace and reconciliation. Attempts to undermine peace, to incite the people and to torpedo the implementation of the Dayton Agreement, especially in Republika Srpska — must stop.

I appeal to all political factions in the region to use what time remains to launch a new and serious attempt to settle their differences and to see to it that Karadzic and other alleged war criminals and enemies of peace are brought before the Hague Tribunal. These people must not be allowed to sleep peacefully. But this demand must be made by the international community, not just Germany: these people must not be allowed to sleep peacefully.

We Europeans have done quite a lot this year to improve the situation on our continent in order to secure a peaceful future for coming generations. Nations that belong together are now growing together, and that in a region that for centuries was divided and at war with itself. The European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization are gradually opening up to Europe's new democracies, while Russia and Ukraine are forming a new, close partnership with both organizations.

And let the world be prepared. In 1999 we Europeans, right on schedule and in conformity with binding stability criteria, will introduce the Euro, the common European currency. The enlargement of the European Union and the introduction of the Euro are historic steps to safeguard the future for coming generations, steps that hardly anyone would have thought possible only 10 years ago. And mark my words: there will be no going back in Europe.

At the same time, we are aware that Europe constitutes only a small section of the much larger global construction site. Everywhere the harbingers of the new era are knocking on the door. Nothing is like it used to be, yet the hopes and wishes of citizens everywhere have remained the same. They want peace and work. They want a roof over their heads, protection from crime, and schools for their children.

Thus the aims and ideals enshrined in the Charter are just as valid as they were in 1945: peace, sustainable economic and social development, protection of human rights and democracy. These aims form a whole, and there is no order of preference.

Eighty per cent of United Nations activities focus on world poverty, and rightly so, because this is the big problem that has remained unsolved since the ending of the East-West confrontation. Nearly a quarter of the world's population — 1.3 billion people — live in poverty, while 840 million suffer from chronic undernourishment. In the Agenda for Development we have adopted the right course for the fight against poverty: good governance, market economy, the rule of law, security for the citizen, regional cooperation and international integration.

Following the lead of the Association of South-East Asian Nations countries (ASEAN), the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) and the now-expanding Southern African Development Community (SADC), the nations of Central America too are forming closer ties. It is becoming more and more apparent that this is the path of progress. The worldwide trend towards closer multilateral cooperation is increasing, and will lead to progress, security and prosperity; it is the path of the future. One the one hand, the Information Age with undreamed-of possibilities, and, on the other, exclusive communities and citizens without rights — this does not add up.

Yes, globalization is a great leveller. Basically, it confronts industrial and developing countries alike with the same question: are we going to accept the challenge of being part of a "single world market", or are we going to mark time? A good number of newly industrialized and developing countries have chosen the way forward, and it has proved to be the right one. They have received the bulk of global direct investment, which in 1996 increased by 8 per cent to almost $350 billion. Nor have the others been forgotten. Within the framework of the G-8 process, the new global partnership for development was established on their behalf. A beginning was made at the Denver summit in June, focusing particularly on the sub-Saharan nations of Africa.

Since 1978 Germany has cancelled debts incurred by the least developed countries and other land-locked developing countries in Africa amounting to more than 9 billion marks. These countries will continue to be the focal point of our development cooperation. Between 1991 and 1995 Germany made available 16.3 billion marks for Africa's sub-Saharan nations, and we are proud of that.

I am glad that the Security Council is holding a special meeting tomorrow on the situation in Africa. Many positive developments have taken place there in recent years, a fact that is often overlooked.

But light and shadow are still very close together. I need only mention Congo Brazzaville, Sierra Leone, Somalia and especially the Great Lakes region. My country, the Federal Republic of Germany, has played a humanitarian and political role in all these conflicts, and we recognize that the African States themselves — in the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and in the subregional organizations — are making significant efforts to settle these conflicts. We must keep on supporting them.

But Africa's real problems lie deeper, in the social and economic sphere, and in the lack of cohesion among the different population groups. In my view, Europe's vast and important neighbouring continent, which has a population of about 800 million covers about 23 per cent of the world's land surface, has little chance of achieving stability and economic progress unless it follows the path of regional cooperation. Such cooperation brings stability where nations are too weak to achieve it individually.

Southern Africa is a good example. At the 1994 Berlin conference, cooperation between the SADC and the European Union was raised to a new level. At our meeting in June we and our African colleagues redefined the framework for the dialogue between the European Union and the OAU. Europe will stay on Africa's side.

Part of this support is that we are helping countries like Angola and Mozambique to rid themselves of the scourge of mines. So far mine clearance by hand has been, at least to me, like trying to remove a sand-dune with a thimble. We cannot accept that. What we need for this task is safe, large-capacity machinery.

The Oslo Conference gave rise to a sign of hope. Eighty countries have put their names to a comprehensive and verifiable ban on anti-personnel mines. I wish to thank the Secretary-General for his personal efforts on this issue. Anyone who, like me, has seen the poor, crippled victims in Cambodia, Mozambique or Bosnia knows that these treacherous killing devices are wholly — I repeat, wholly — immoral. I therefore appeal to all countries still on the outside to join the Ottawa process and help us ban these infernal devices from the face of the Earth.

The world, galvanized by the spirit of freedom, has been totally transformed. But this new freedom and its by-products constitute a major test for us all, not only as regards competitiveness but also as regards our solidarity, our ability to show tolerance and to work together, and the opening of markets.

The East-West conflict has been consigned to the past. Here too, the question now is: are we going to try and safeguard the future for posterity, or are we going to allow new enemy stereotypes to divide us once again? There must be no clash of civilizations. Hence, the dialogue of civilizations and world religions must be raised to a new level. To me this is the spiritual challenge as we approach the twenty-first century, for only thus can we bring different standpoints closer together and mobilize the energies needed for the joint resolution of humanity's colossal problems.

I suggest that we hold a forum here at the United Nations to consider how we can generate new momentum for this dialogue worldwide. The matter is important enough. Considerable cultural energy and potential for innovation lie unused, and the United Nations is the proper catalyst for their development.

But we must be very clear that there cannot and should not be dialogue with terrorists. Terrorism has again raised its ugly head in Mostar, Jerusalem and Cairo. The vileness of the latest carnage in Algeria would be difficult to exceed: it really does take your breath away. How long can the international community look away? I know how difficult it is to help from the outside, but the world community cannot accept the cruel killing of utterly innocent people in the dark of night without standing up and reacting. We are not powerless in the face of such evil slaughter of mostly uninvolved persons. In Denver, the Group of Eight called upon all nations to sign the international conventions on terrorism. We must resolutely combat terrorism all over the world, using all democratic means at our disposal. I call upon the General Assembly to complete by the end of this session the negotiations on a convention against terrorist bomb attacks, as proposed by the Group of Eight.

Extradition or suitable punishment remains the principle underlying our efforts to combat terrorism. No one should give refuge to terrorists. We need a united global front against terrorism. To combat fanatical killers we can only consistently apply the law as well as police and judicial measures. The source of sympathy for terrorist objectives must be withered by political means. In other words, we must get to the roots, which in most cases are social problems.

On my last visit to the Middle East I spoke with many citizens in Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Hebron, and in the refugee camps in Gaza. I sensed their fears and concerns. Those who have seen the wretched conditions in the camps know that these people must be given a chance to improve their lives. They need to be able to hope again that the peace process is something from which they will benefit, that the violence will stop, that they can find work and have enough to eat, and that their children can go to school.

For these hopes to materialize, both sides must show a large measure of good will. President Arafat must do everything in his power to stop the terrorism. And the Israeli Government must desist from any measures which cause the Palestinians to doubt Israel's commitment to peace. The settlements issue remains the crucial test here; at least, that is what I believe. Continuing to build in Har Homa only makes matters worse, so a moratorium is essential. To my mind, this is the only way to reopen the door to peace talks.

As for Iran, the new Government has changed its tone. It remains to be seen whether this will lead to a new, constructive policy, especially with regard to the Middle East peace process, human rights and international law. Germany has always maintained close and friendly relations with the Iranian people, and in spite of all that has happened, in spite of the Mykonos affair, we are ready for talks. It is up to the Iranian Government to provide the basis on which these can take place.

We are pleased that Mrs. Robinson has taken up her post as the new High Commissioner for Human Rights. Nowhere is the need for a new culture of dialogue so great, we believe, as in the process of protecting such rights. This is crucial to world peace and global development. Any society that fails to respect human rights, which include the right of development, is blocking its own progress. Our policy on this matter is based on dialogue and respect for different cultures. But we also agree with Pope John Paul II, who has said that if we want peace we must respect the conscience of the people. No civilization or religion denies people their rights or approves of murder and torture. Nor can any such action be justified on political grounds.

We need an international criminal court of justice. The statute of such a court is to be drawn up in Rome next summer. The court must be empowered to act of its own accord where genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and wars of aggression are concerned, and to do so wherever national courts either do not exist or cannot or are unwilling to prosecute such crimes. The terrible genocides in Rwanda and Srbrenica are warning signs. Such cardinal crimes should not go unpunished.

Our responsibility towards future generations is particularly acute where protection of the natural sources of life is concerned. That is why it is crucial to maintain the spirit engendered by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the Rio Summit. That is the purpose of the environment initiative put forward by Chancellor Kohl together with Brazil, South Africa and Singapore.

The climate conference to be held in Kyoto in December will be a major test of the industrial world's commitment to the environment. Germany intends to reduce its greenhouse-gas emissions by 25 per cent by the year 2010, based on 1990 levels. We and our partners in the European Union are asking the other industrial countries to cut theirs by at least 15 per cent. That would go part of the way towards meeting our responsibility towards posterity.

When we look at the air pollution in southern Asia, we cannot fail to admit that we urgently need to agree on a forest convention. We must put an end to the ruthless burning of forests to clear vast areas of land. Those who deplete and destroy their own natural resources will make us all lose out in the end. The eleventh hour is approaching.

Two weeks from now the decision on where to locate the secretariat of the Convention to Combat Desertification will be taken in Rome. We ask members to vote for Bonn. Since the secretariat of the Framework Convention on Climate Change already has its headquarters there, it makes sense to combine the two.

The General Assembly is at a crossroads. Either we solve our reform problems now and come out of our introspective shell, or the United Nations will lose political standing — that is what would happen. All regional organizations, industrial, developing and non-aligned countries have a joint responsibility for implementing the reforms we have been talking about for so long. This applies to all areas of United Nations activity: economic and social, Security Council and finance.

The Secretary-General has submitted a bold package of reforms. Even though we do not agree with every detail, we support the package as a whole. I appeal to all Member States: let us not talk it to shreds, but make quick decisions so that the necessary measures can be put into effect. The United Nations has to be streamlined in order to increase its efficiency. Whatever savings are made through reform should be used for developments-assistance purposes.

The Security Council must reflect today's political realities, one of which is the greater status of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. The debate on this matter should not be artificially prolonged. This the most important body of the United Nations, and it cannot credibly and effectively perform its role as the guardian of peace in the twenty-first century if its composition remains basically as it was in 1945.

It is gratifying to note that a large number of States regard the reunited Germany as a suitable candidate for a permanent seat on the Security Council. If elected, we will be able to make a good contribution, one that is in keeping with the spirit of the Charter.

Two years ago, on the Organization's fiftieth birthday, we solemnly pledged to hand on to the next millennium a United Nations equipped and funded for its task. That promise has to be kept, and it has to be kept by all. This means, first and foremost, paying our contributions in full and on time, because without finances this Organization is a powerless one. The European Union has submitted its proposal for changing the scale of assessments, the purpose of which is to ensure a fair distribution of burdens.

Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights reads,

> "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood."

This vision must be sustained: the vision of a world in which it is not the law of the strongest, but the strength of the law which prevails; a world in which both the strong and the weak feel at home; a world fit to live in which we can safely leave to our children and to our grandchildren.

The President: The next speaker is the Vice-Premier and Minister for Foreign Affairs of China, His Excellency Mr. Qian Qichen. I give him the floor.

Mr. Qian Qichen (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): Please allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its current session. I believe your wisdom and experience will enable you to accomplish your lofty mission with distinction. At the same time, I would like to express my appreciation to Mr. Razali Ismail for his contribution as President of the General Assembly at its last session.

This year, 1997, is no ordinary year for China. Last February, when Deng Xiaoping, the chief architect of China's reform and opening-up, passed away, the 1.2 billion Chinese people were immersed in deep sorrow. Turning grief into strength, we are determined to heed his behest by deepening reform, opening the country still wider to the outside world, stepping up national development and promoting the cause of world peace. Here, on behalf of the Chinese Government and people, I would like once again to thank the United Nations and its Member States for the sincere condolences they expressed on the passing of Deng Xiaoping. Your kind words gave us strength at our time of bereavement.

Just a few days ago, the Fifteenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China came to a triumphant conclusion in Beijing. This Congress, holding high the great banner of Deng Xiaoping theory, charts the future course of China's development with a blueprint and displays the resolve to carry forward the cause of building socialism with Chinese characteristics well into the twenty-first century.

On 1 July of this year, China resumed its exercise of sovereignty over Hong Kong, which wiped out our national humiliation of one and a half centuries and opened up a new chapter in our peaceful reunification. During the more than two months since its return, Hong Kong has enjoyed social stability and economic prosperity, which fills the people of Hong Kong, of China and of the world at large with great joy.

The realization of Deng Xiaoping's concept of "one country, two systems" in Hong Kong carries profound significance. Firmly adhering to this concept, we will keep up the peaceful reunification of our motherland by ensuring a smooth return of Macao and eventually resolving the Taiwan question. Taiwan is an inalienable part of Chinese territory, and the Taiwan question is purely an internal affair of China. Any country that attempts to use the Taiwan question to put pressure on China or even clamours for "two Chinas" or "one China, one Taiwan" has acted in total contravention of the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and the relevant General Assembly resolutions. Such behaviour will be absolutely unacceptable to the Chinese people, as well as to all the countries upholding justice in the world.

As the international situation continues to undergo profound changes, peace and development have become the main themes of our times. The world is evolving towards multipolarity with growing diversity in countries' political, economic and cultural lives. This trend has become an irresistible tide of history.

The two world wars in the first half of the twentieth century plunged mankind into unprecedented havoc. And the cold war, which lasted for more than four decades in the latter half of our century, kept humanity in the dark shadow of war. Reviewing the past and looking to the future, people throughout the world are anxiously waiting for the establishment of a just and equitable new international political and economic order, and they are hoping to see lasting peace and prosperity for all in the coming century.

The cold-war security regime that featured military alliances and the arms race is, as has been proved, incapable of making peace. Expanding military blocs and enhancing military alliances under new circumstances can do little to bring about greater security. Relations between States should be based on the five principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit and peaceful coexistence. Each country has the right to choose a road of development according to its own national conditions, and no country should interfere in the internal affairs of other countries on whatever grounds. This must serve as the political prerequisite for global and regional security.

All countries should increase their mutually beneficial cooperation in the economic field, eliminate unequal practices in trade and economic relations, and do away with discriminatory policies with a view to gradually narrowing the gap between the rich and the poor and achieving common prosperity. This should serve as the economic foundation for global and regional security.

All countries should step up consultation and cooperation in the security field, increase mutual understanding and trust, and undertake to settle through peaceful means, whatever differences and disputes they may have. This is the practical way to achieve global and regional security.

In the first half of the year, five countries — China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan — signed the agreement on mutual reduction of military forces in the border areas; the four-party talks aimed at bringing about a new peace mechanism on the Korean peninsula were launched; and the Regional Forum of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) introduced a preliminary form of cooperation on security issues featuring equal participation and negotiated consensus. These are some of the examples of searching for new models of security cooperation and of the initial progress already made.

We feel concerned about the recent setbacks in the Middle East peace process. We are of the view that the relevant United Nations resolutions should be complied with, agreements reached among the parties concerned in the peace process should be honoured, the principle of land for peace should be adhered to, and terrorist activities should stop. We hope that the parties concerned will work together on that basis so that the Madrid Peace Conference on peace in the Middle East will resume at an early date. We are also deeply concerned about the incessant conflicts and turmoil which have plagued Africa since the beginning of this year, and wish the African countries steady progress along the road of peace and development.

The past year has seen new progress in the field of international arms control and disarmament. The Chemical Weapons Convention has entered into force; the Preparatory Committee of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty has started its work; the extent of nuclear-weapon-free zones is increasing; and negotiations on the efficacy of the Biological Weapons Convention have made further headway.

In our view, no one should try to monopolize the market in the name of preventing proliferation or try to interfere in the economic and technological cooperation of other countries, developing countries in particular. An overhaul of the discriminatory and exclusive non-proliferation regimes and arrangements is thus necessary, on the basis of universal participation, and the United Nations should see to it that it accomplishes something in this regard.

We maintain that continued efforts should be made to advance the process of multilateral arms control and disarmament. The universality of international arms-control treaties should be strengthened and complete adherence to them ensured. Instead of weakening and undermining security, arms-control and disarmament efforts should reinforce it. The target of disarmament should not be shifted to developing countries, as countries with the largest and most sophisticated arsenals bear a special responsibility for disarmament.

I would also like to draw the Assembly's attention to China's recent announcement of a unilateral step of disarmament — that is, having reduced its troop strength by 1 million in the 1980s, China will further reduce its military by 500,000 troops within the next three years. This is a move of major significance in the field of disarmament.

In the past year, the overall situation of the world economy has been good. Economic links and mutual penetration among countries and regions are on the constant increase. The importance of international cooperation should be given a fresh evaluation with a view to making it broader, closer and more fruitful.

Developing countries are most vulnerable to the impact of adverse environmental conditions because of their weak economic foundations. At present, the international financial market is highly globalized and very risky. We should work to stabilize the financial market and ensure steady economic growth of the developing countries.

The Uruguay Round agreements should be implemented in a comprehensive, faithful and balanced manner, and attempts to impose a linkage between environmental or labour standards and trade must be opposed.

Environment and development pose a common challenge to mankind. The United Nations has held two important conferences in the 1990s, setting forth a set of guiding principles for the solution of the issue. We hope the international community, developed countries in particular, will honour its pledges to provide funds and transfer technology to the developing countries so as to translate the declaration of partnership into real action.

Many transboundary issues, such as poverty, unemployment, refugees, drugs and crime, need to be addressed through consultation by the international community. The work of the United Nations in the social field needs to be strengthened. All countries should, in keeping with the principles of mutual respect, equality and mutual benefit, endeavour to promote international cooperation. They should get down to practical tasks, the first of which is to help developing countries deal with their most urgent difficulties. We hope that the special session of the General Assembly on international drug control, scheduled for next year, will yield positive results by formulating a cross-century strategy for combating drug-related crimes through strengthened international cooperation along with effective measures of implementation.

China will continue to support the United Nations in its work in the social field and will make a greater contribution to social progress around the world.

The realization of human rights is the common ideal of mankind. All countries have made great efforts to this end, with both achievements and lessons. We maintain that the universality of human rights should be respected; yet their realization must be integrated with the conditions of each country. A review of United Nations practice over the past 50 years and more shows that when countries or regions do this they will enjoy social stability, economic development and popular contentment. When they do not, society will face disintegration, with people losing their most basic human rights and freedoms, and gross violations of human rights will even take place when chaos erupts as a result of war.

We say it is quite natural for people to differ on the human rights issue. The question is how to deal with these differences. Which is the better approach: dialogue or confrontation? I opt for dialogue. Only dialogue can enhance mutual understanding and cooperation. Confrontation, on the other hand, can only lead to further estrangement and do nobody any good. We are pleased to see that more and more countries are in favour of dialogue in handling the human rights issue.

The Chinese Government attaches importance to human rights and is dedicated to promoting and protecting human rights of its people. Having repeatedly suffered from foreign aggression in the past, the Chinese people know full well how state sovereignty and territorial integrity fundamentally guarantee the realization of their human rights. We in China — taking upon ourselves the task of feeding, clothing, sheltering and educating, and providing travel facilities to, our 1.2 billion people — know full well how vitally important our right to subsistence and our right to development are. To enable our people to lead a freer, happier and more democratic life, we are focusing above all on the development of our economy and on advancing democracy and our legal system.

China will soon sign the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and is studying earnestly the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. We stand ready to work with other countries in a continued effort to promote cooperation in the international human rights field.

As the most important intergovernmental organization in the world, the United Nations occupies an irreplaceable position in international life. At the same time, an evolving situation calls for reform of the United Nations.

Last July, Secretary-General Kofi Annan submitted an extensive report on the reform of the United Nations. We appreciate his effort.

We are in favour of reforming the United Nations. The purpose of such reform is to strengthen the role of the United Nations and enhance its efficiency. Measures taken in this regard must reflect the common interests of all Member States and the results must be able to stand the test of time. To this end, we offer the following views.

United Nations reform is the shared cause of all Member States. It should allow full play to democracy, heed the voices of all sides and take into account the interests of various parties. The reform plan should be widely acceptable to Member States.

To enhance efficiency, an appropriate reduction of personnel and expenditure is necessary. What is important, however, is for the reform to put greater emphasis on development issues with a view to strengthening rather than weakening the United Nations role in the promotion of economic and social development.

The reform should help preserve the diversity in the United Nations, which is a microcosm of the diversity of the world. Only when world diversity is recognized and respected can different countries live in harmony and make progress together.

The reform should stress practical results, place value on quality, and progress in an incremental manner.

The enlargement of the Security Council should follow the principle of equitable geographical distribution and ensure a proper balance between developing and developed countries. The Security Council will better perform the lofty mission entrusted to it under the United Nations Charter only when it becomes more broadly representative.

Payment of assessed dues is the bounden duty of every Member State under the Charter of the United Nations. We urge the countries concerned to pay off their arrears without conditions and as early as possible in order to put the United Nations on a sound financial basis for normal operation.

Countries around the world need the United Nations. So does the United Nations need their support.

The President *(interpretation from French):* The next speaker is the Minister of Foreign Affairs of France, His Excellency Mr. Hubert Védrine, and I now call upon him.

Mr. Védrine (France) (*interpretation from French*): May I first say, Sir, how pleased my country is at your election as President of the fifty-second session of the United Nations General Assembly. I should also like to say to the Secretary-General that France welcomes the action he has already taken and assure him that he has our support and confidence.

I shall begin my statement by expressing a conviction on behalf of my country: the world needs the United Nations more than ever. No, the United Nations did not lose its *raison d'être* with the end of the cold war, the end of the arms race between the two blocs and the head-on clash of differing ideologies.

Mr. Arias (Panama), Vice-President, took the Chair.

On the contrary, the need for a universal regulating body has never been so apparent. The reasons are known to all. Without regret, we left the era of bipolar confrontation to enter, in 1991, a new, global, evolving world in which 185 States cooperate, make alliances with one another or compete in stable or, conversely, unstable combinations. In this world, States are no longer the sole players. The giant conglomerates, the financial markets, the media, opinion groups and non-governmental organizations all play an increasing role. Because of this, there is an overriding need for clear, fair and predictable ground rules to establish a framework for settling conflicts or mere differences. For, nowadays, no serious problem can be resolved by one country, even the most powerful, entirely on its own.

Unless we take care, unless we manage to build a world in which the rule of law prevails among all States, a world in equilibrium between its major centres of power, other scenarios will ensue: the absence of a counterweight will encourage the predominance of a single Power, and, inevitably, that Power will be tempted to engage in unilateralism; for want of organized regional entities, globalization will exacerbate the economic — and sometimes political — struggle of each against all; States will find themselves further weakened, and some will implode under the effects of aggressive nationalism, which is often contagious. Fierce competition will render virtually impossible environmental conservation, however urgent, however vital in the true meaning of the word, as well as the fight against drugs and crime; greater respect for human rights will be compromised.

Our common task must be to forestall such dangers and, at the same time, to consolidate, together, the achievements of recent years. For this, regional groupings are one of the best possible foundations. Europe, which has been the crucible of so many wars, has been showing the way for half a century. The growth rates achieved by many countries in Asia, in Latin America and now in Africa, announce the emergence of new centres of power and prosperity. Political and economic entities are being organized and institutionalized: South-East Asia meets in the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN); in Latin America, the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) is developing, as are the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in southern Africa and the Economic Community of West African States (COWAS) in the west of that continent. To some extent, one might also include cultural and political entities, such as the Commonwealth and la *Francophonie*. This is a sensible way to adapt to globalization.

However, at the global level we need a coherent, effective United Nations with the resources necessary to carry out its missions. It is the task of this body to facilitate the smooth organization of international relations and to determine universally recognized rules of law. To be sure, other organizations exist in various sectors, and these have their own, very important areas of authority. But none of them can take the place of the United Nations in giving the world of tomorrow a set of comprehensive rules. True to its tradition, France will support all the Organization's efforts to that end.

I come now to the main object of the session which is beginning. To carry out the major role we expect of it, the United Nations must retain or reacquire the means to take decisions and to act. For this, we must resolve two matters: United Nations reform and the financing of the Organization. The ability of the United Nations to act in the years ahead will depend on the solutions we find together.

France approved of the move by the new Secretary-General at the outset of his mandate to continue the study initiated by his predecessor, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali. The main lines Mr. Kofi Annan has proposed for the work and the impetus he has given to the process of revamping the Organization have received France's full support, a support shared by France's partners in the European Union. The remarks made from this rostrum by its current President, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Luxembourg, illustrate this. I should like to comment more specifically on three points: the Security Council, financial reform and restructuring.

The current composition of the Security Council no longer accurately reflects the political geography of today's world. Clearly, it has to be reformed — that is to say, enlarged — to become more representative.

In this connection, we must take into account the Security Council's indispensable role in peacekeeping and thus elect countries able to contribute to this task, whether they are from the North or the South.

Accordingly, my country is in favour of the accession of Germany, Japan and three countries from the South to permanent seats and the establishment of new non-permanent seats. For a Security Council composed solely of the principal countries of the North would not be representative. Nor should we forget that, once it is enlarged, and hence more representative, the Council will still have to be effective. That is essential.

The proposals that have been submitted to us should make it possible to move forward. However, we are all aware that no consensus has yet been reached and that debates on this matter will be difficult. National interests and the concerns of regional groups must be given due consideration. In any event, I welcome President Razali's perseverance throughout the fifty-first session of the United Nations General Assembly, which made it possible to draft a solid working basis from which we must now proceed to work to find a solution.

Furthermore, financial reform of the United Nations is a particularly complex issue. It is shocking that the United Nations should be in a precarious state and therefore in a situation of financial and budgetary dependence with respect to its debtors. I believe that we will be able to move towards a solution on the basis of three principles: what is owed to the United Nations must be paid in full, on time and without conditions. Finally, the payment of contributions should not be a way of exerting pressure on the Secretary-General and the other Member States.

With these rudimentary principles as a basis, France is open to discussion on all aspects of the problem. We will have to decide on the scale for apportioning assessments among all States. There is no perfect scale, but some are not as bad as others. The concept of each State's ability to pay, which has enjoyed consensus since the outset, still seems simple, logical and fair today. On that basis, a solution can be found that takes account of the needs and interests of each State. France will do its utmost to facilitate the settlement of the financial crisis. We can be both imaginative and conciliatory — like the European Union's plan. But our efforts will succeed only if there is respect for the rules I have just recalled, which reflect our Organization's impartiality and credibility. If the United Nations were forced to comply with the unilateral demands of one among us, in regard both to its financing and its functioning, then how could it convince anyone in the future that it is impartial and faithful to the principle of the equality of all under the Charter, and generate respect for its decisions?

I come now to restructuring. The Secretary-General has undertaken to restructure and regroup the Organization's institutions. France appreciates the logic of this approach. It therefore welcomes the establishment in Vienna of a centre to deal specifically with combating new transnational dangers such as organized crime, drug trafficking and terrorism, problems that we must fight with ever-increased vigour. It is also very much in favour of integrating the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Centre for Human Rights into a single entity in Geneva where the main humanitarian aid services are already established. It also hopes that the main issues involving disarmament can continue to be addressed in Geneva.

From this rostrum, I applaud the appointment of Mrs. Mary Robinson to the post of High Commissioner for Human Rights. Her very strong personality is commensurate with the challenges her task entails. The commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, starting on 10 December this year, will provide an opportunity to reaffirm, in the face of persistent violations and ever-recurring acts of barbarism, the universality of these rights. But we will also have to ask ourselves, in addition to making the usual declarations that are still necessary, what political and economic actions are needed to make real headway, in specific situations, towards respect for human rights, and how the emergence of democracies can be encouraged from outside.

The United Nations, while adapting, must remain the preferred instrument for taking action in the interests of peace. At this time, the United Nations is really the only organization that can try to bring order to an international society which is becoming fragmented and globalized at the same time. The United Nations is faced with both a resurgence of every kind of micro-nationalism and the strengthening of regional entities. Most conflicts are now not between States but within them. Given these new challenges, the United Nations has already demonstrated how adaptable and flexible it is. But we must continue. To ensure the lasting settlement of conflicts, consciences have to be assuaged and justice needs to be done to put an end to the endless cycle of revenge. The perpetrators of the most serious crimes must be tried impartially, with respect for the rights of the defence, and after an exemplary investigation which reveals the facts in full. This is why France supports the action of the international criminal tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, and hopes that the forthcoming conference on an international criminal court will be a success.

Since the beginning of the decade, the Organization's actions to promote peace and international stability have changed radically. The time has passed when large-scale peacekeeping operations were mounted solely under the blue flag of the United Nations, in Cambodia and the former Yugoslavia for example, in order to take on massive challenges alone. Today, the United Nations intervenes more and more frequently in conjunction with other organizations or by authorizing the action of regional actors. In Europe, the United Nations is pooling its efforts with those of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in sensitive theatres of operation, and even with those of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. In Africa, for the first time, the Secretaries-General of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) have in the past year appointed a joint special representative in the person of Ambassador Sahnoun, in the Great Lakes region. It is good that these two organizations are working together. This development must be encouraged. We must also help African States and organizations to strengthen their own peacekeeping capabilities. To this end, countries outside the African continent must pool their efforts and not multiply the number of rival and sometimes redundant initiatives. For instance, the Government of France, the United Kingdom and the United States recently agreed to act together with all those who wish to do so to strengthen the peacekeeping capabilities of African countries, under the auspices of the United Nations, of course, and in cooperation with the OAU.

But, in France's view, encouraging Africa to become more involved in resolving crises certainly does not mean that the international community should relinquish its other responsibilities with regard to the African continent. It is therefore essential that the United Nations be ready, once the declared conditions are met, to act in Congo-Brazzaville. By the same token, the many recent tragedies in the Great Lakes region make sustained international involvement indispensable. This United Nations commitment to promote peace and development must also serve to further human rights. That is why it is important for the humanitarian investigative task force in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to be able to carry out its mission. I might add that by spending too much time talking about crises in Africa, one might forget the essential point, namely that the African continent is taking off in quite an unprecedented way. My country believes in this.

We are all still mobilized by the situation in the Middle East. The peace process, set in train on the initiative of clear-sighted and courageous men on both sides, raised tremendous hopes. We can clearly see the increasingly tragic consequences to which the current stalemate would lead, were it to last. The peoples of this region are once again stuck in an impasse, in a situation of humiliation, resentment, and the fear of terrorism. New efforts are therefore necessary so that these two peoples, Israeli and Palestinian, which are matched in terms of insecurity and fear of the future, can together find justice and security. France gave its full support to the action by the American Secretary of State, who recently went to the Middle East. Indeed, the United States has a special responsibility and special means to attempt to reinvigorate the peace process and effectively combat the deadly acts of extremism. France and Europe are ready to take part in any constructive move to this end.

What can the United Nations do? It cannot take the place of the parties concerned, which have the primary responsibility. It is up to the Organization to state, or restate, the law and to recall the principles which must be the basis for any peace if we want it to last. I refer here to the resolutions adopted by the Security Council on the conflict in the Middle East, not forgetting resolution 425 (1978), which deals with the integrity of Lebanon in particular.

Many other crisis situations where the wounds have not healed could be mentioned from this rostrum — so diverse is the work of the United Nations. In particular, I am thinking of the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where security has been restored but where the construction of a State with viable democratic institutions remains uncertain; and of Albania, where the new stability, thanks to resolute European action authorized by the United Nations, is giving rise to new hopes. I am also thinking of the tenacious efforts of the United Nations to contain or defuse the crises in Haiti, Cyprus, Georgia, Afghanistan, Tajikistan and elsewhere.

Finally, let us not forget, now or ever, much-needed development assistance.

Of course, the insertion of emerging economies, including the former underdeveloped economies, into the global economy is an excellent thing; indeed, past efforts in this regard have proved to be well founded. But this must not be a selfish excuse for the rich countries to give up their effort to provide development assistance, which is equally necessary. In any event, this is very much an imperative for the leaders of the member States of the Francophone community. The summit of these States in Hanoi in November will attest to their interest in more balanced development and also to their commitment to respecting the multiplicity of cultures and languages.

I will say no more, however — other than to draw one single conclusion. While the world has changed so much over the past 50 years, and even more over the past six years, its inhabitants still voice the same needs. The rule of law must be continually consolidated and the democratic ideal put into practice, faced as we are with the temptations of oppression and the use of force, for which new pretexts are constantly being invoked. How can we be sure that the factors that make for war and chaos are banned for ever from all continents, including Europe?

At this moment of our Organization's reform, let us not forget the lessons of history. Only international dialogue, the common management of crises, beginning with their prevention, and the wise conservation of the earth's resources make it possible for the voice of reason and peace to prevail and for confidence in progress to be rebuilt. The United Nations is the right and the only legitimate forum for such international discussions, and the only one where they are universal. Our Organization is an irreplaceable framework and a vital necessity for us all. In the past, it has often been able to deter, address, resolve and prevent. Let us reform it so as to make it even more useful.

The Acting President (interpretation from Spanish): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Angel Gurria, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mexico.

Mr. Gurria (Mexico) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: Let me first of all congratulate the President on his well-deserved election. It is a source of satisfaction to us that the President of his country, Ukraine, Mr. Leonid Kuchma, is on this very day starting a state visit to Mexico.

To the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, we extend our sincere gratitude for the extremely dynamic way in which he is discharging his important responsibilities, and particularly for his significant contribution to the process of reform of the Organization.

The work of this session of the General Assembly will cover the main items on the international agenda. Allow me to begin this statement by referring to those which are of particular significance to my country.

In relation to the topic of disarmament, significant steps have recently been taken. Some prominent ones have been the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the approval of a Convention prohibiting anti-personnel mines, and the forthcoming conclusion of an inter-American convention against the illicit traffic in arms, munitions and explosives.

Also prominent at the regional level are the efforts the Rio Group has decided to undertake towards beginning consultations with a view to establishing criteria for self-regulation in the purchase and transfer of certain types of sophisticated conventional weapons. Latin America is one of the regions with the lowest military expenditures in the world, and there will be no grounds for asserting that an arms race exists among our countries. There is, nonetheless, agreement to prevent this from happening, and, accordingly, we hope that the meeting to be convened in Cancun next January by the Rio Group itself, with the participation of all its member States, will attain its objectives. Despite all these advances, we reiterate our concern at the lack of tangible nuclear disarmament measures, and we stress that the issue continues to be the responsibility of the international community as a whole, and not the exclusive province of the nuclear Powers. Accordingly, we regret that the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice of 8 July 1996, which called attention to the illegality of the use of nuclear weapons and the obligation to negotiate nuclear disarmament measures, has not been taken into account by the main nuclear-weapon States.

It is appropriate to recall that when the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons was indefinitely extended, a series of commitments was drawn up with a view to making progress towards nuclear disarmament, but so far not even the most minimal progress has been made. In an effort to break the impasse, Mexico, along with other countries, submitted to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva a programme of action, in which we called for the consideration and analysis of certain concrete disarmament measures with all the seriousness they deserve.

To the same end, we support increasing the number of nuclear-weapon-free zones, along the lines of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America — the Treaty of Tlatelolco. Mexico will continue to support the Brazilian initiative to consolidate the southern hemisphere as a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

With reference to the Convention banning the use of anti-personnel mines, it should be pointed out that the recent approval of that instrument in Oslo was the culmination of negotiations which had been conducted for one year within the framework of what is called the Ottawa process, as a result of an initiative by the Core Group formed by Mexico, Canada and other countries in October 1996. The Government of Mexico considers that the use of this category of weapons constitutes a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law, and that the only viable solution to the problems it poses is the total abolition of anti-personnel landmines and the destruction of those currently stockpiled. Mexico welcomes the result achieved, with the justified hope that the countries which still remain outside the process will join in it.

Let us not continue to regard peace as an unattainable objective or a utopian dream. Peace is not only the absence of war, but a way of life which establishes as the norm cooperation among free and equal nations to overcome the problems that plague human beings in all corners of the world. Peace is and must be possible, because it is essential to us.

Mexico views drug trafficking as a serious threat to its national security and to the health of humankind. We maintain that this phenomenon promotes violence, corruption and other unlawful activities, such as illegal arms-trafficking, money-laundering and the diversion of chemical precursors.

Among the possibilities offered by international cooperation in this sphere, Mexico has been extremely active in signing bilateral agreements to combat drug trafficking and in participating in forums dealing with the subject, such as the Inter-American Commission for Drug Abuse and the Rio Group. To this must be added the important process initiated by Mexico for the purpose of holding, in June next year, a special session of the General Assembly devoted to the consideration of the world situation with regard to the illicit drug problem, so that concrete measures against drug-trafficking and its associated crimes can be agreed upon. We invite all the Member States of the United Nations to participate actively at the highest level in that special session.

Mexico rejects repressive police measures to prevent and control migratory flows, convinced as we are that the use of such methods, far from resolving problems, clouds relations between frontier communities and many times leads to the abuse and mistreatment of migrants by the authorities responsible for applying migration policy.

As part of an effort to seek multilateral solutions to this problem within the framework of the fifty-third session of the Commission on Human Rights, the Mexican delegation submitted a draft resolution on migrants and human rights, which was adopted by consensus, both in the Commission and in the Economic and Social Council.

On the basis of the Mexican initiative, the Commission on Human Rights decided to establish a group of experts to formulate recommendations on strengthening the promotion, protection and exercise of these rights. We have a well-founded hope that it will be possible to secure the establishment of a minimum standard of conduct for countries in relation to migrants, regardless of their legal status.

Recently, in the states of Texas and Virginia of the United States of America, two Mexican citizens were executed after all the means of recourse that could be used to obtain the commutation of their death sentences had been exhausted. In neither of the two cases was the person concerned able to contact the consulate of his country at the time he was arrested. This was a flagrant violation of article 36 of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations. This irregularity probably cost them their lives. There are 35 more Mexicans who have been sentenced to death in the United States, and a number of them did not have access to the consular protection to which they were entitled. The state of Texas went so far as to justify the omission by saying that it was not a party to the Convention in question. In the case of Virginia the State Department of the United States offered "profuse apologies" to the Government of Mexico after the Mexican national had been executed.

Mexico wishes to denounce, in this highest forum of mankind, this appalling state of affairs. We shall be seeking an advisory opinion from the Inter-American Court of Human Rights on the legality of applying the death penalty when an international convention that affects due process has not been complied with. In our view, this violates the spirit and letter of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the American Declaration on the Rights and Duties of Man, the juridical importance of which has been recognized by the Court to which I have referred.

We are convinced that at this session of the General Assembly — imbued with new leadership and having placed on its agenda a number of reports containing specific proposals for progress in the reform process, including the one submitted by the Secretary-General himself on 16 July this year — we are at the threshold of a new phase in the Organization's development.

With the same resolve with which it has invariably welcomed any effort to raise international affairs to the sphere of law, Mexico, as a founding Member of the Organization, reiterates its full readiness to contribute to the efforts we shall have to make to face this challenge.

For a number of years, when the issue of reform was discussed we were content to pursue the rationalization of the work of the United Nations through changes which did not entail amendments to its founding Charter. Nevertheless, the present juncture is so crucial that we need to analyse where the defects that have prevented us from being more efficient as an Organization are to be found, in order to redress them.

I would like to reiterate some of the basic positions Mexico maintains on the subject of the reform of the Organization, while at the same time adding now some comments regarding the proposals made by the Secretary-General, as well as referring to some decisions which we have taken recently.

We maintain that absolutely scrupulous respect for the principles of law embodied in the Charter, including in the decisions the Security Council has to take on matters affecting the peace and security of the world, is a fundamental rule of conduct of countries in their international relations.

Since 1945 Mexico has attacked the very concept of a division between permanent and non-permanent members of the Security Council, basically because the existence of the two categories establishes a discriminatory situation — a situation which is exacerbated by the permanent members having been given the right of the veto, a privilege that has certainly been abused and has frequently prevented the Council from fulfilling its basic task.

We also maintain that the need to increase the capacity of the United Nations to prevent conflicts and resolve those that exist requires not only the reform of the Security Council and its working methods, but also the strengthening of the mechanisms for resolving conflicts through peaceful means.

With regard to the Secretary-General's proposals, we welcome them and view with special interest the idea of strengthening the Secretariat by creating a post of Deputy Secretary-General and establishing a strategic planning unit. We do not believe, however, that the objective of cutting costs should guide the reform process. Avoiding duplication and implementing the programme of the Organization in an optimal way are the objectives that should guide our work.

Mexico has repeatedly maintained that the financial situation the Organization is experiencing stems from a failure to comply with the obligations derived from the Charter. The current financial situation has no link with the assessment system. The way to deal with it is by making full, timely and unconditional payments of the assessments the General Assembly assigns to Member States. If we must review the financial situation, then certainly all of us Member States are ready to do so, as long as the result is an equitable solution.

The financial crisis of the Organization should not lead us to take decisions that distort the spirit of reform we share. Carried to the extreme, this logic would call for the designation of Ted Turner as a permanent member of the Security Council, with the right of veto. By the way, we appreciate Mr. Turner's generosity.

We view with concern some of the proposals made for merging subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Council — for example, the Commissions on Narcotic Drugs and Crime Prevention — which could in our view devalue the treatment accorded to these subjects. The merger of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Centre for Human Rights, on the other hand, would undoubtedly strengthen treatment of the subject. Thus, while we consider that the new tasks to be performed by the High Commissioner should be in conformity with the provisions of the international instruments in force and the guidelines of the competent bodies in this field, we strongly support this proposal. We also welcome Mary Robinson as High Commissioner.

In relation to the reform of the Security Council, the Mexican Government wishes to draw particular attention to the following elements in the declaration adopted by the Heads of State and Government of the Rio Group on 24 August 1997 in Asunción, Paraguay, marking the first occasion on which that forum has conducted an in-depth exchange of views on this important issue.

Reform of the Council is needed in order to correct the imbalances in its current composition, improve its decision-making mechanisms and make the conduct of its work more transparent. A reform resulting in treatment that discriminates between developed and developing countries would not be acceptable. The veto should be restricted, as a first step, to Chapter VII of the Charter. The expansion, the reform of working methods and the question of the veto form an integral part of the reform of the Security Council and should form parts of the same agreement; in other words, we view them as an indivisible whole.

Lastly, the Heads of State and Government of the Rio Group reiterated their readiness to continue participating actively in the Working Group dealing with the subject, with a view to securing general agreement, and decided to give their Ministers for Foreign Affairs

> "responsibility for maintaining a broad dialogue on the issue which takes the regional interest into account and seeking understandings on the subject".

Representativeness, political legitimacy, the regional approach and consensus solutions are thus the elements that should guide the work being undertaken.

To the extent that the above criteria are met, Mexico wants to make it clear that it is fully prepared to participate in an expanded, renewed and representative Security Council. Nevertheless, the reform of the Security Council must be a factor promoting cohesion and a catalyst of cooperation among countries. At present, there are so many and such diverse formulas that we run the risk of the issue causing divisions and tensions.

Clearly, the international community has not yet found the formula for achieving consensus on this delicate matter. The issue calls for additional consultations and better definitions of the very meaning of reform. States cannot conceive of Security Council reform as a source of national prestige or a way of consolidating regional hegemonies. Any reform that is adopted must be inclusive and strengthen regional equilibriums, which are sometimes very fragile and very vulnerable.

Today, the States Members of the United Nations appear, for the most part, to feel threatened more than imbued with hope by the proposals that are circulating with regard to the Security Council. A wave of lobbying and national and regional expectations has been unleashed in which the interests of the Organization itself are conspicuous by their absence. This is precisely the opposite of the spirit we want to achieve through reform.

It would be paradoxical and unacceptable if this crucial challenge which the reform of the Security Council poses us were to result in a fragmenting of the United Nations at a time when unity of purpose and community of efforts are more important than ever. The issue is too important to be dealt with hastily.

The reform package proposed by the Secretary-General is capable of making rapid progress, supported by a broad consensus. The issue of the Security Council does not appear to have secured the same level of agreement. Let us make progress on the first and continue to reflect on the second.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.